32 ADVENTURES REVIEWED!

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d20 system Special

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Weave the Pattern!

6 Beginning Hero Templates

26 Beasts by Robert Jordan!

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–Pulp Heroes

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Violence

d20 Special/Annual 6 • 2001

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The watchful, yellow eyes of the *Wheel of Time*'s Perrin Aybara scan the wilderness in this scene from Darrell K. Sweet, who has illustrated every *Wheel of Time* novel cover to date.

Perhaps Perrin's on the hunt for one of the ferocious Beasts of the *Wheel of Time*, which Robert Jordan himself provides on page 36.

d20 system

Your Revolution

At the 2000 GEN CON Game Fair, as thousands of eager gamers gathered around the doors of the convention center in eager anticipation of a dash for some of the first copies of the 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Player's Handbook*, I had my eye on something bigger. When the doors opened, the throng surged toward the Wizards of the Coast booth, hoping to finally get their hands on the biggest thing to hit the RPG business in more than a decade.

While it's difficult to deny the impact of that new *Player's Handbook*, that GEN CON also saw the debut of two other products that represent something just as important to the RPG industry, and to D&D gamers. Atlas Games was on hand to present *Three Days to Kill*, an adventure by John Tynes that asked characters to break up a meeting using whatever means possible, including murder. Green Ronin Publishing's Chris Pramas introduced *Death in Freeport*, a haunting mystery set in the decadent streets of a city run by pirates. Though each adventure contained notable innovations that set them apart from the dozens of other scenarios coming out that year, it was a *similarity* that gained them a place in gaming history. Under the hood, both adventures shared the same game engine—3rd Edition D&D.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures.

By third-party companies.

Three Days to Kill and *Death in Freeport* were just the first of hundreds of products to use the shared "d20 System," which Wizards of the Coast has "opened" (with some restrictions) to just about anyone with the wherewithal to put together a product and get it published. Taking a cue from the open source codes of the computer programming industry, Wizards has allowed the entire industry to play with its toys, and the results have been staggering. The new rash of d20 products have launched countless new campaigns, reinvigorated flagging hobby stores, and strengthened existing publishers. Thrillingly, it's also given rise to a crop of dozens of never-before-seen companies, each with its own story to tell and each (usually) with a host of brand new designers willing to tell it.

We're seeing a phenomenal explosion in the popularity of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, and the d20 System is a prime contributor to that success. But the d20 "movement" (and make no mistake, a movement it is) is bigger than a simple strategic business move for gaming companies. All those products mean that now, more than ever, fans of D&D and the d20 System have a shot at having their voice heard, of contributing published work to the "canon" of the evolving game rules.

Somewhere out there, the next Castle Greyhawk or Undermountain lurks in the notes of a gamer who's always wanted a shot at the big leagues, but who hasn't previously had the chance. Heck, Necromancer Games already has given us a new super-adventure, Rappan Athuk, a so-called "Dungeon of Graves" that all but screams out to be considered the next Tomb of Horrors. But, at least to me, the most exciting development among third-party publishers has yet to appear. Someone, somewhere, is going to push this game in directions Wizards of the Coast, giant corporate tarrasque that it is, couldn't hope to explore.

And that's going to be pretty damn cool.

The d20 revolution is *your* revolution. Grab the red flag, polish up your notes, and send them around to publishers or even to the new *Polyhedron* d20 magazine. After all, the person who pushes the system in that exciting, new direction could be you.

Erik

Erik Mona
Editor

DRAGON

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First Watch

Previews, notes & news on the world of d20 gaming

The Stars are Right

"It is true that I have sent 6d10 points of damage through the head of my best friend, and yet I hope to show by this statement that I am not his murderer."

– Daniel Upton, "The Thing on the Doorstep"

"How will they handle Sanity checks?" Once Wizards of the Coast announced a d20 conversion of Chaosium's highly lauded *Call of Cthulhu* game, fans could talk of little else. To answer this question, and the thousands of other details involved in bringing one of the most respected games in the roleplaying industry to a new game system, Wizards turned to experienced game designers Monte Cook and John Tynes.

Monte Cook, author of the new *Dungeon Master's Guide*, was co-designer of the new edition of D&D and lead designer of Call of Cthulhu d20.

One of the founders of Pagan Publishing, John Tynes' work includes serveral industry favorites, including *Delta Green*, an award-winning modern-day setting for *Call of Cthulhu* campaigns and *Three Days to Kill*, one of the first d20 adventures to be published.

Artists working on the project include fan favorites Wayne Reynolds, Toren Atkinson, Raven Mimura, Richard Sardinha (below), Adam Rex, and Heather Hudson.

Fans of the d20 system unfamiliar with Lovecraft's dark, horror-filled vision of the 1920's must understand two things: the universe holds more horrors than your character has ever imagined, and few who encounter those horrors escape with either their mind or body intact.

Old hands know the dangers of the Cthulhu mythos and wonder how the two game systems will meet. In the words of the game's designers, the new game is "the story, the places, the concepts, and the people from the *Call of Cthulhu* game as seen through the lens of the d20 rules." Several mechanics remain almost identical to the original game, specifically the Sanity rules and

the Cthulhu Mythos skill. This makes for an excellent blend of the unique, horrific *Call of Cthulhu* setting and the fresh, balanced rules of the **d20 System**. Although classes as such don't exist as they do in the D&D game, the game still uses levels, skills, feats, and other elements familiar to D&D players.

The 320-page *Call of Cthulhu* d20 book includes rules to handle character creation, guns, explosives, spells, sanity, and, of course, the horrors of the Cthulhu mythos.

Table of Contents:

Few pages say as much about a book as its table of contents. Here's a quick glance at the new *Call of Cthulhu* d20's content's page.

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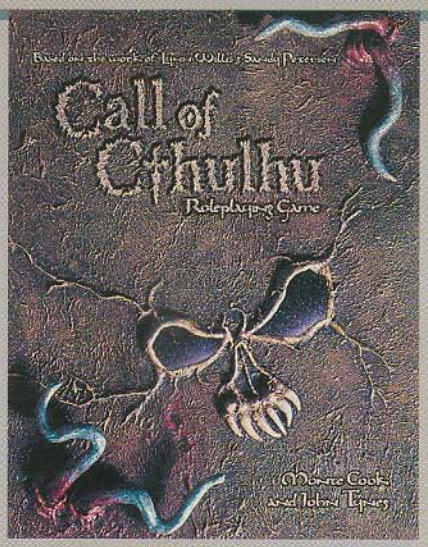
Chapter 1: Character Creation
Chapter 2: Skills
Chapter 3: Feats
Chapter 4: Sanity
Chapter 5: Combat
Chapter 6: Equipment
Chapter 7: Magic
Chapter 8: Creatures
Chapter 9: The Cthulhu Mythos
Chapter 10: Gamemastering
Chapter 11: Stories
Chapter 12: Settings
Adventure 1: The End of Paradise
Adventure 2: Little Slices of Death
Appendix 1: Lovecraftian D&D
Appendix 2: Conversion Rules
Bibliography

Sample the Madness

Can't wait for the book? Here's some juicy material to tide you over until you're giggling with insane glee. None of this material is designated as Open Game content, but all of it is guaranteed to drive you quite mad.

Deep One

Medium-Size Aberration (Lesser Servitor Race) (Aquatic)
Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft., swim 40 ft.
AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +5 melee, 1 bite +0 melee (on land); or 2 rakes +5 melee, 1 bite +0 melee (in water); or longspear +5 melee (land or water)
Damage: Claw 1d4+4, bite 2d4+2, rake 2d4+4; longspear 1d8+6



Call of Cthulhu
320-Page Hardcover
Release: March
Price: $39.95 U.S.; $55.95 Canada

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. reach with longspear)
Special Qualities: Low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7*, Listen +7*, Move Silently +4, Spot +7*
Feats: Alertness

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm aquatic (especially off the coast of Massachusetts)
Advancement: 3-6 HD (Medium-size); 7-13 HD (Large); 14-26 HD (Huge)
CR: 2
Sanity Loss: 0/1d6

I think their predominant color was a grayish-green, though they had white bellies. They were mostly shiny and slippery, but the ridges of their backs were scaly. Their forms vaguely suggested the anthropoid, while their heads were the heads of fish, with prodigious bulging eyes that never closed. At the sides of their necks were palpitating gills and their long paws were webbed. They hopped irregularly, sometimes on hind legs and sometimes on four . . . . their croaking, baying voices . . . held all the dark shades of expression which their staring faces lacked.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Shadow Over Innsmouth"

Deep ones are misbegotten creatures of the deep. A deep one appears as an abominable crossbreed of a human and amphibian. Its fins are merged with twisted arms and legs; its bent back is crowned with a long, spiny frill; at its neck, gills gasp for air. A deep one's slender, muscular tail makes it a powerful swimmer, while bulbous eyes give it good vision both in and out of the water.

In the timeless depths of the sea, the deep ones' alien, arrogant lives are coldly beautiful, unbelievably cruel, and effectively immortal. The longer they live, the larger they grow, although a deep one's rate of growth decelerates with each passing year. They come together to mate or worship Great Cthulhu, as well as Father Dagon and Mother Hydra, the oldest and wisest of their race.

Ambitious deep ones interact with humans. They appear to have a monstrous lust to produce hybrid spawn. The reason may lie in the breeding cycle of these beings, of which little is known. Deep ones may be worshiped by humans with whom they regularly interbreed, for deep ones are immortal, unless slain, and so are any hybrid offspring. Typically, hybrids inhabit remote coastal villages. Globally, they inhabit many cities submerged beneath the waves. One is off the coast of Massachusetts near Innsmouth.

Such a hybrid begins life as a human-looking child, though hybrids are sometimes said to have the "Innsmouth look." A hybrid can live into her twenties or longer before the change begins. Over a period of a few months, the human's appearance undergoes a monstrous transformation, until she has become a deep one, both in body and mind.

Deep ones can breathe both air and water. They speak the human languages they previously knew, as well as their own languages of the deep.

Combat

In the water, deep ones are dangerous enemies that attack by biting, clawing, and raking with their rear legs. On land, they are less dangerous, for they cannot rake. Deep ones sometimes fight with weapons, typically preferring two-handed melee weapons with reach (such as longspears and tridents). Particularly intelligent deep ones who've learned spells hang back to cast them while their fellows swarm enemies.

Skills: *While underwater, deep ones receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen, and Spot checks.

Spectral Hunter

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid (Lesser Servitor Race)
Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 13 (+2 natural, +1 Dex)
Attacks: 2 claws or 1 bite +9 melee; or spear +4 ranged
Damage: Claw 1d6+6, bite 1d4+6, spear 1d6+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Make invisible
Special Qualities: Invisible at will, incorporeal form at will, darkvision (60 ft.), spirit-item (usually a doll)
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +6
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 10
Skills: Disable Device +9, Hide +5/+9*, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +9.
*Spectral hunters gain a +4 racial bonus to their Hide skills toward foes able to see invisible; they gain a +8 racial bonus against those that can't.
Feats: Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Run, Track

Climate: Spectral Hunters haunt isolated, remote spots, such as Devil's Canyon in California
Advancement: 3-10 HD (Large); 11-20 HD (Huge).
CR: 3
Sanity Loss: 0/1 when invisible, 1/1d3 when leaving signs of presence, 1/1d6+2 when visible

Each monstrous creature marks the wondrous glare,
Drops, fades, and in empty air!
– H. P. Lovecraft, "Psychopompos: A Tale in Rhyme"

Spectral hunters are large, hideous humanoids some 6 to 7 feet in height. Rubbery, jet-black flesh covers their bodies. Their eyes are large and red; their mouths are wide and filled with rows of shark-like teeth. The spectral hunter's long, tapering nose matches its general appearance, which is horribly thin and reedy except for a grossly distended abdomen. Their feet are still roughly human, although clawed and vaguely web-like, but their hands have either grown 10-inch-long claws or been replaced altogether with two great crab-like pinchers. When visible but immaterial, spectral hunters often appear to float or hover slightly above the ground like ugly, bloated balloons.

Over a period of a few months, the hybrid's human appearance undergoes a monstrous transformation, until she has become a deep one, both in body and mind.

A spectral hunter is created by casting the spell become spectral hunter upon a willing recipient (who may be the caster himself). The character's soul is transferred to a spirit-item, typically a doll, which must be placed in safekeeping while his body transforms into a monster. The spectral hunter is tied to its spirit-item and dies if it ever leaves the one-mile area around it, or if its spirit-item is destroyed. They exist to guard some site or item, stalking, tormenting, and then slaying all intruders.

Spectral hunters have no language of their own. They retain knowledge of any language they knew in their previous life, but no longer speak it.

Combat

Cowardly but cruel, spectral hunters prefer to play with their victims, allowing them to catch glimpses or signs of their passage (a shadowy figure in the distance, a distorted footprint in the sand) before attacking. When they do attack, they love to pounce suddenly from hiding, emerge from invisibility to slash and slay, and then fade from view once more. They avoid fair fights and frontal assaults except in the last extremity (for example, if the investigators have discovered a hidden spirit-item).

Invisible at Will (Ex): Unless they will themselves to appear, spectral hunters are naturally invisible. This means they gain a +2 bonus to all attack rolls made while invisible unless their target can somehow see invisible creatures (via the powder of Ibn-Gazi or some similar means). Defenders lose all Dexterity bonuses to their Armor Class. Invisible creatures gain 100% concealment and can only be attacked if their foes have some means of guessing their location; even then, all such attacks suffer a 50% miss chance.

Incorporeal at Will (Ex): Spectral hunters can phase between their material form and incorporeal form as a move action. Spectral hunters use this ability to quickly get behind targets, escape wary prey, or simply baffle those they are stalking.

Make Invisible (Ex): On occasion, spectral hunters draw prey into their world to isolate an investigator from his companions. The spectral hunter must successfully grapple its chosen victim, who must then make a Will save (DC 20). If the attack succeeds, and the Will save fails, the character fades from view.

The victim can then see the spectral hunter in all his glory, requiring a Sanity check if he can see him clearly. The victim also can proceed to attack in earnest. More commonly, the lone victim cries for help while relentlessly pursued by those who cannot effectively interpose themselves. Such unfortunates often reappear in bloody shreds when the effect wears off, 1d6 rounds later.

THE SLEEP SPELLS OF YOUR DEMONIC GNOLL ADEPT WEAKEN HIS CRUSADERS.

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Two-Fisted Pulp Action

Lurid Action in Pulp Heroes

"The problem with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS," insists *Pulp Heroes* designer Dave Noonan, "is that there aren't any Nazis to kill." Next month, Wizards of the Coast rectifies that glaring omission with *Pulp Heroes*, a complete **d20 System** game appearing in *Polyhedron* 149, the first official **d20 System** magazine (see sidebar below). According to Noonan (*Manual of the Planes, Song & Silence*), *Pulp Heroes* accommodates pulp era adventuring anywhere along the "noir-wahoo" scale.

"I tried to model the 'reality' of the world presented in the pulp fiction magazines of the '20s and '30s," Noonan said. "It's very different from the reality of the real world. Real people aren't Olympic athletes *and* super geniuses *and* born on Mars. That's the beauty of d20—it was pretty easy to construct a framework in which all that was possible."

For Noonan, the biggest challenge posed by *Pulp Heroes* was incorporating the wide array of topics in the world of pulp fiction without forcing characters into stereotypical boxes they can't ever leave. "I want the detective to be able to jump into the rocket ship and try to fly the thing, if he wants to, rather than waiting for the rocket pilot to show up."

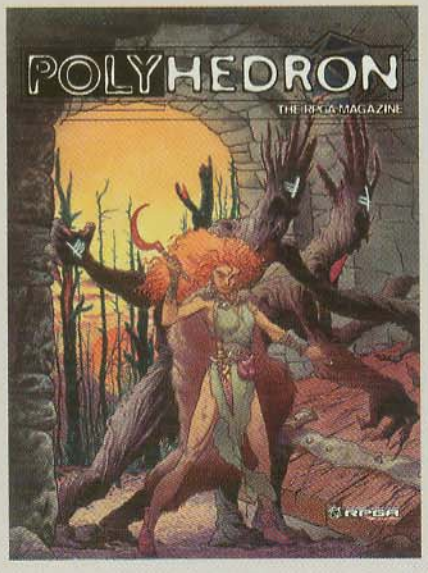
In addition to rules for origins (which behave a lot like race in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS), classes, skills, feats, combat, and powers and discoveries (think psionics and techno magic items), *Pulp Heroes* introduces an innovative system for resolving chases, both on foot and in vehicles. When asked to summarize the rules of *Pulp Heroes*, Noonan had this to say: "It's got rules for inventing stuff, crashing things into other things, and gunfights that model the forgiving physics of the pulp world."

Pulp Heroes, with a fully painted cover by comics icon Tony Harris, comes your way in December as part of the new *Dungeon/Polyhedron* magazine.

The New *Polyhedron*

At nearly 150 issues, *Polyhedron* is the second longest-running professional RPG magazine in the industry. For more than two decades it's covered the activities of the Role Playing Game Association (RPGA) as a private newsletter sent to members. In December, *Polyhedron* gains a new focus and much, much wider newsstand distribution.

Now merged with the venerable *Dungeon* magazine, *Polyhedron* serves as Wizards of the Coast's official d20 magazine, a task it's not taking lightly. Each bi-monthly issue will contain a complete d20 mini-game or campaign setting, as well as industry news, reviews, and coverage of the community of d20 gamers (as represented by the RPGA). All that and a free issue of *Dungeon* for just $5.99. Annual subscriptions run $22.95 and can by ordered by calling 1-800-395-7760. UK readers contact +44-18-58-41-4713.



Thrilling Classes

Explorer: A traveler to distant lands and civilizations who can adapt to nearly any situation.

Gangster: An underworld figure, often connected to an organized crime family.

Martial Artist: A warrior who dismisses modern firearms in favor of exotic hand-to-hand combat techniques from the mysterious Far East.

Mystic: A delver into ancient secrets of the mind and soul.

Private Eye: A detective-for-hire skilled in investigation, surveillance, and analytical skills.

Scientist: A brilliant inventor capable of building wondrous machines that push the boundaries of science.

Soldier: Often a current or former member of the armed forces who excels at marksmanship. Some are also adept at piloting airplanes and more exotic craft.

Astounding Feats

Pulp Heroes contains dozens of new feats. Here are a few to whet your appetite.

Neck Hairs Rise

You have a sixth sense that warns you of danger.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 13+.

Benefit: You can make a Wisdom check (DC 20) to avoid being surprised. A successful check allows you to act during the surprise round, even if you would otherwise be surprised.

Signature Vehicle

You are most at home at the controls of your favorite car or plane.

Prerequisite: Dex 13+ and either Pilot 6+ or Drive 6+.

Benefit: When you choose this feat, choose a specific model of vehicle (like a Pan Am Clipper or a Duesenberg roadster). The vehicle gains a +2 Dodge bonus to AC.

Steely Gaze

Just looking into your eyes can be a frightening experience.

Benefit: You get a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks, and you can Intimidate as a move-equivalent action.

Normal: Attempts to intimidate are generally full-round actions.

Stronghold breaks the standard RTS mold with a dose of 'SimCastle.'" –PC Gamer

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GOOD AND EVIL

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Keep 'em Flying!

Godlike Superbeings Fight the Reich!

You probably don't recall the names Mr. Messerschmitt, Cien, Prevnost, Feuerzauber, or the Obfuscator popping up in your World War II history books. Nor do you remember Charles Lindbergh defecting to the Reich, Baba Yaga emerging on the war-torn Eastern Front, or an Omaha Beach defended by parahuman übermenschen. But in December, thanks to Pagan Publishing and Hobgoblynn Press, you will.

Godlike presents roleplaying in a world ravaged by war, where the threat of crossfire means rays of supercharged light and errant lightning in addition to bullets and shrapnel. In *Godlike*, players take the role of Talents, super-powered humans employed by one of many governments as the decisive weapons in the greatest of all wars. Featuring a unique rules system by Greg Stolze (*Unknown Armies, Usagi Yojimbo*), a complete **d20 System** conversion by Mike Mearls (*In the Belly of the Beast, To Stand on Hallowed Ground*) and a world developed by designer/illustrator Denis Detwiller (*Delta Green, Delta Green: Countdown*) *Godlike* promises to be the first serious attempt at developing a supers game for the **d20 System**.

The *Godlike* army started marching about five years ago as an idea Detwiller had for a graphic novel. While that project never made it to press, he remained intrigued by the idea of a "realistic" approach to super-heroics against the backdrop of World War II. There's no Captain America in Detwiller's European Theater. "Colorful costumes," as he put it, "just give your enemies something to aim for."

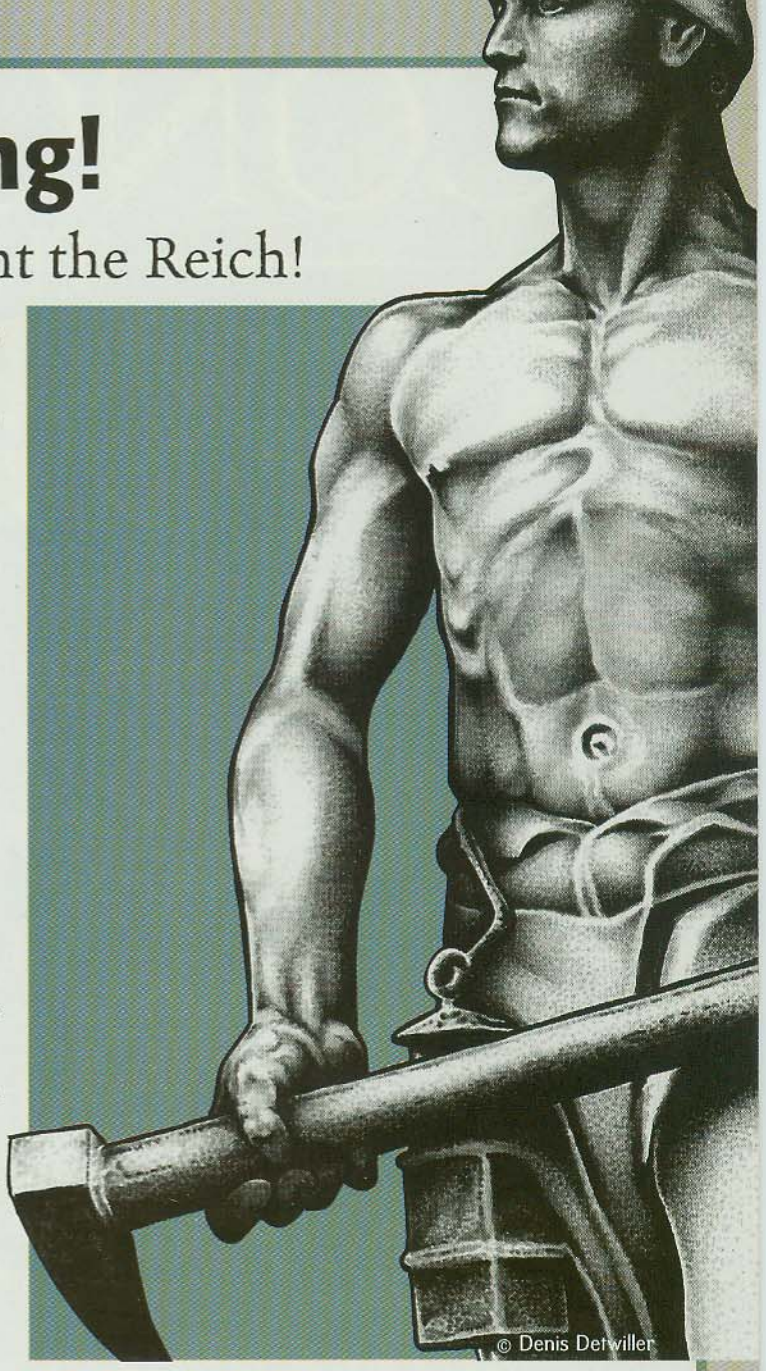
Players can assume many different roles in a *Godlike* campaign, from iconic heroes who lead assaults on enemy strongholds to parahuman grunts who battle enemy Talents on the front lines. The main thematic difference between *Godlike* and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, suggested Mearls, is government accountability.

"In D&D, most characters are wanderers who do as they please. In *Godlike*, characters are living assets of the army. They're too important and dangerous for the government to let them wander off and do as they please," he said. "In some ways, this structure makes it easier to construct a campaign. The characters are just sent on a mission and report back to base for their next assignment when they're done."

For Mearls, the biggest challenge was making the game familiar to d20 players while sticking to Stolze's core game design, which relies on matching result numbers in pools of d10's to determine the success or failure of actions. To ensure that his rules served both masters, Mearls deconstructed the d20 mechanics to their core components.

"Feats and other pieces of the **d20 System** follow patterns, and I spent more time explaining and codifying those patterns with an eye toward allowing gamers to create their own stuff rather than creating piles of new feats and skills," he said.

What changes can players expect? Characters in *Godlike* belong to a single class, with concepts tied to class, such as base attack bonus and base saving throw bonuses, being opened for greater player customization. "For instance," Mearls said, "rather than starting out with a hard-coded set of save bonuses, players get three points to distribute amongst their saves as they see fit."



Super powers ended up looking a lot like skills. "A guy who can shoot fire might have the ability Fiery Breath +4," Mearls explained. "When that guy breathes fire, he just makes an attack at a base attack bonus of +4. Another character with Flight +8 might make a Flight power test to pull off a dangerous stunt or overtake a fleeing plane."

"But not all powers are created equal," he continued. "If I purchase the Flight power, I have the option of boosting my maximum speed or adding other options to the power. In return, I may have to pay more points per rank in my Flight power for that boost. When you purchase a power, you have the option to add perks and flaws to the power, each of which affects the cost per rank of that power."

The 320+-page hardcover book blitzes your way in December, with a retail price of $39.95. For more information, visit www.tccorp.com/godlike.

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What the heck is a d20 system?

by Ryan Dancey

At the 2000 GEN CON Game Fair, a new term entered the vernacular of the RPG hobby. Since then, a revolution has been quietly underway that is changing the way people design and publish roleplaying game products. For more than a year, a lot of people have been talking about, buying, playing, designing and publishing "**d20 System**" games.

The idea behind the **d20 System** is pretty straightforward. As a part of designing the new version of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Wizards of the Coast spent thousands of hours interviewing players, playtesting rules, and carefully examining the core assumptions and systems of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. After going though that process, the design team felt that they had established a long and detailed list of strong rules and simple philosophies about what made a roleplaying game fun to play and easy to learn. That material was not a complete game in and of itself, but rather it was the foundation for many possible games, exploring many possible worlds and genres. In time, that material was given the formal title "**d20 System**," and Wizards of the Coast decided to make it the basis for all of its roleplaying game efforts. We created a special logo for the **d20 System** and put it on all of our new roleplaying products, starting with the new core books for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.

At its most basic, the **d20 System** means:

- Characters are defined by six basic attributes; Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma, with scores ranging from 1 to infinity.
- Rolling higher is always better than rolling lower.
- To see if a character's action is successful, roll a d20, add some modifiers, and compare to a target number. If the result is equal to or higher than the target number, the action was a success.

Many of the **d20 System** games that Wizards of the Coast will be publishing will have some other similarities:

- Three kinds of saving throws (Fortitude, Reflex, and Willpower).
- Skills (things you get better at over time) & Feats (things your character has that make her special, but that don't improve with practice).
- Hit points and Armor Class.

A **d20 System** game might have classes and levels, or it might have some other system for tracking character advancement. It might use DUNGEONS & DRAGONS standard hit points, or it might have Wound Points and Vitality Points, as in the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game*; or it might have a whole new system. It might have D&D-style "fire and forget" magic spells, or it might have a whole new system like that showcased in the upcoming *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. Armor Class might be the same system seen in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, or it might be a system that models how much damage armor can "soak" from a hit. **D20 System** games will be designed for science fiction, techno-thrillers, superheroes, many flavors of fantasy, and as many other combinations of worlds and genres as the designers can imagine. As long as most of the basic rules are similar to the other **d20 System** games, it will be relatively easy for a player who's already familiar with one **d20 System** game to quickly learn another.

A game publisher using one basic set of rules for all of its games is not a new idea. The concept first gained widespread application in the late 1980s, and several companies, such as White Wolf (the *Storyteller System*), Steve Jackson (*GURPS*), Palladium (*Palladium RPG*), and AEG (*AEG House System*) have shown that there can be tremendous advantages to focusing on a core set of rules. Another big advantage is that players who learn to love one game in such a family have an easier time learning the other games from that publisher—meaning that each new game has a ready-made potential audience of players and game masters.

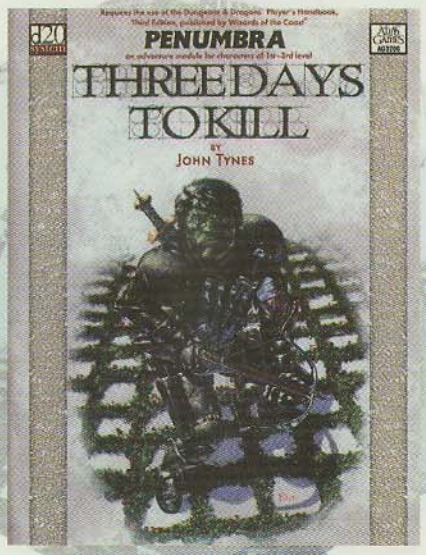
The Player Network

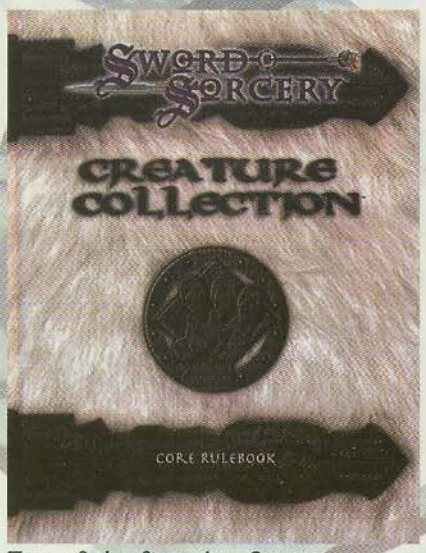
People who play roleplaying games form an interconnected network. You might play with your cousin, who attends college in another state. At col-

lege, she plays with a friend who has a brother in the Navy. When they're both home together, they play together with a group from their hometown. When he's at sea, he plays with a group on his submarine. That means that there's a connection between you and those sailors playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS on the other side of the world. All of you, and everyone in your various gaming groups, and everyone they play with, and everyone in their various groups, etc. are all one big network. You all share a common knowledge of the rules, and for the most part, you all play the game in a similar way. Sure, some groups may be more interested in exploring the details of their character's lives, and others might be worried about what lurks behind the next corner in a dungeon, but you and all the other DUNGEONS & DRAGONS players have more in common than you might expect.

When a new player gets exposed to the roleplaying game hobby and wants to start playing regularly, that person joins the global community as well. Games that have lots of players tend to remain popular over long periods of time because it is easy to find other people to play with who already know the rules. Games with smaller communities can be challenging because players often have to recruit and teach new players the rules before they can begin to enjoy playing the game together. As the first, and the largest game, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS has the unique benefit of being the game that more people know how to play *in common* than any other roleplaying game in the world. New players are thus more likely to play D&D than any other game, and when they look for a regular group of players, they are more likely to find a group interested in D&D than any other game. That's the reason that DUNGEONS & DRAGONS remains, year after year, the best-selling roleplaying game in the world. In general, it is the game that delivers the most value, because it is the game that has the most players.

By using the basic rules of the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in the company's other roleplaying games, Wizards of the Coast is trying to make those new games as valuable to players as DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. So a player who wants to play *STAR WARS*, for example, should be able to quickly





Two of the first d20 System products.

teach her friends to play the game if they all know how to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, because the two games have so many things in common. They use the same basic rules to determine if a character's actions are successful. They have a shared vocabulary. Depending on the game, it may be very similar to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, or it might be substantially different. The goal of the **d20 System** is to make the transition relatively easy.

The Next Step

That's the point that many other game publishers reached in the evolution of their own basic rules. Wizards of the Coast has taken this idea one very radical step forward. We've created a system that will allow anyone to publish rules and extensions, or even whole new games, based on the **d20 System**. That system allows both commercial and noncommercial publications, requires no approvals, and makes no demands for royalties or payments of any kind.

The reason Wizards of the Coast is taking this unprecedented action is that it believes that by providing access to the network of players who use its rules, it will create a market for lots of interesting game products that will enhance the value of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, and other roleplaying games that Wizards of the Coast publishes. Rather than by just a small team of dedicated staff who work exclusively for Wizards of the Coast, now, products for the **d20 System** can be created by thousands of independent designers, and even competitive publishers! The result will be an explosion of exciting new products that all work to strengthen the whole player community. And the stronger that community is, the more core rulebooks Wizards of the Coast sells. The more core books sell, the more new players there are, and the larger the market becomes for all the other products on the market. This process creates a "virtuous circle," where everyone benefits from the constant and continuous growth.

Let's take a look at how this market was created.

First, Wizards of the Coast created a license modeled on the Open Source licenses developed in the Free Software community. This agreement is called the Open Gaming License. You can read the text of the license (and a lot of other material about the **d20 System** at (www.wizards.com/d20). The Open Gaming License creates a framework that accomplishes the following:

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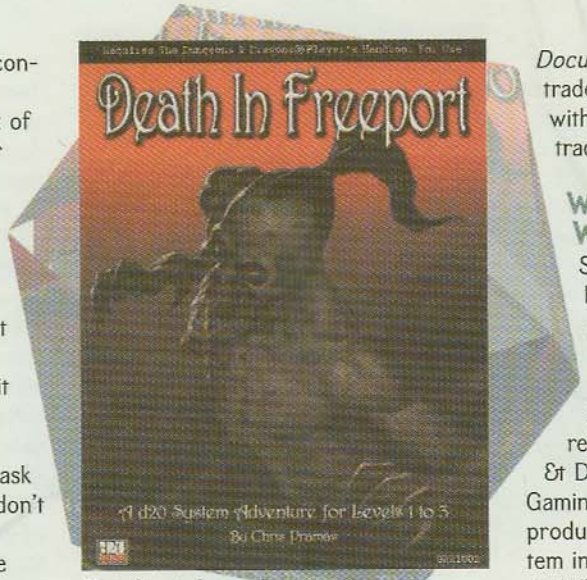
The Open Gaming License itself has no actual content; it is just a framework to define how the copyrights and trademarks involved can be used by each publisher. To actually make the License meaningful, someone has to contribute some Open Game Content.

To that end, Wizards of the Coast developed the *System Reference Document*. You can see the formally released parts of the *System Reference Document* at (www.wizards.com/d20). This material has been released as Open Game Content, using the Open Gaming License. When complete, the *System Reference Document* will include the core rules from the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, including all the basic rules, plus most of the monsters, magic items, and spells from the core books. Over time, it will be expanded to include material from many sources, and will provide a foundation for many types of games and many kinds of genres. In a very real sense, the *System Reference Document is* the **d20 System**.

Anyone can take the material from the *System Reference Document*, using the Open Gaming License, and publish adventures, sourcebooks of new spells, monsters or magic items, or even create whole new worlds just like TSR did with DRAGONLANCE and the FORGOTTEN REALMS. You could even use the *System Reference Document* to publish an entirely new roleplaying game!

The Small Print

The Open Gaming License has some strict rules about not using other companies' trademarks without permission. One of the goals of the project is to help people make legal products that are compatible with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. But we want to control the use of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS trademark for our own benefit. Wizards of the Coast wants to promote the whole idea of the **d20 System**, not just D&D. To facilitate that goal, Wizards has also created the **d20 System** Trademark License. You can read this license at (www.wizards.com/d20). This license works with the Open Gaming License to give you the right to tell the world that your product is compatible with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in a very specific way, and the right to use the **d20 System** logo on your products and your advertising.



The first d20 adventure ever published, *Death in Freeport*, won the prestigious Origins Award earlier this year.

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Where We've Been, Where We're Going

Since the 2000 GEN CON Game Fair, we've seen the first examples of products using the Open Gaming License and the **d20 System**, as many publishers took advantage of the timing of the release of the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and the advent of Open Gaming. Some of the first commercial products to be released using this system included Atlas Games' *Three Days to Kill*, Green Ronin's *Death in Freeport*, and Sword & Sorcery's *Creature Collection*. As this article is being written, there are more than 200 announced **d20 System** products either on the market or being designed for release in 2001! They are from publishers with long and prestigious hobby gaming histories, and from companies that have been started just in the past few months to take advantage of this new opportunity.

The future looks very bright for the concept of Open Gaming in general, and the market success of **d20 System** products from Wizards of the Coast and from many other publishers. A torrent of creativity has been unleashed from many people who have always wanted to try their hand at designing a roleplaying product and from many established companies who have an interest in selling to the large and growing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS community. As time passes, the licenses and the products will change and evolve as the best and brightest designers try their hand at this new format and we all learn from the experience.

If you are interested in getting involved with this project or just want more information, please visit the Open Gaming Foundation web site at www.opengamingfoundation.org, and watch the Wizards of the Coast web site at www.wizards.com/d20 for more exciting **d20 System** news!

Ryan Dancey is the spiritual godfather of the **d20 System** *movement. Formerly DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Brand Manager, he recently left Wizards of the Coast to found Organized Play, Inc. (www.organizedplay.com).*

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All's Fair in Lovecraft and Warcraft

Making Other People's Worlds Your Own

by Mike Selinker • illustrated by Stan!

Agent K flattened against the dungeon wall. "Look alive, Slick. That Lernaean pyrohydra hasn't had its Listerine today."

"No problemo, K," J responded. "Wait till he gets a load of my Noisy Cricket...."

Hey, it could happen. With the d20 System, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is even more flexible than ever. Already we've adapted *STAR WARS* and *DIABLO II* for publication, with *WARCRAFT III* and Lovecraft's *CALL OF CTHULHU* on the horizon. *DRAGON Magazine* and *DUNGEON Adventures* have explored *Le Mort d'Arthur*, Shakespeare, Robin Hood, and the heroes of the Persian War.

And for each of these ideas, we've got a dozen more we'd like to do. Adapting source material for D&D is one of the treats of DMing. Around the halls of Wizards of the Coast, we find any excuse possible to make somebody else's world our own. At one annual gathering, we've run games based on *Mystery Men*, *Scooby Doo*, *Watership Down*, *Jonny Quest*, *Thundarr the Barbarian*, and, yes, even All Your Base Are Belong To Us.

Nobody published these games, of course. We just wanted to play in somebody else's sandbox for a few hours.

After doing this kind of adaptation both for fun and as Wizards of the Coast's Creative Director of Licenses & Acquisitions, I've stumbled across a few tried-and-true methods for how to do it. As you look to your source for inspiration, work at resolving these issues:

Campaign Theme: Envision a short description of what your campaign will accomplish, based on the source you're looting.
Examples: "Hunting down fearsome cloned dinosaurs" (*Jurassic Park*); "Questing for holy relics and uniting the English countryside" (King Arthur).

Campaign Setting: Pick a place, time, and worldview that can host that theme, defaulting to those of the source if nothing else seems appropriate.
Examples: A modern-day private island off Costa Rica where dinosaurs run wild; the lawless lands of Britain, where dragons and sorceresses threaten civilization.

PC Team Dynamic: Based on the size of your group, figure out what unites the characters in your game, mirroring the interaction of characters in the source.
Examples: A team of hunters, scientists, and plucky children in dino-land; skilled knights, wizards, and clerics united against evil.

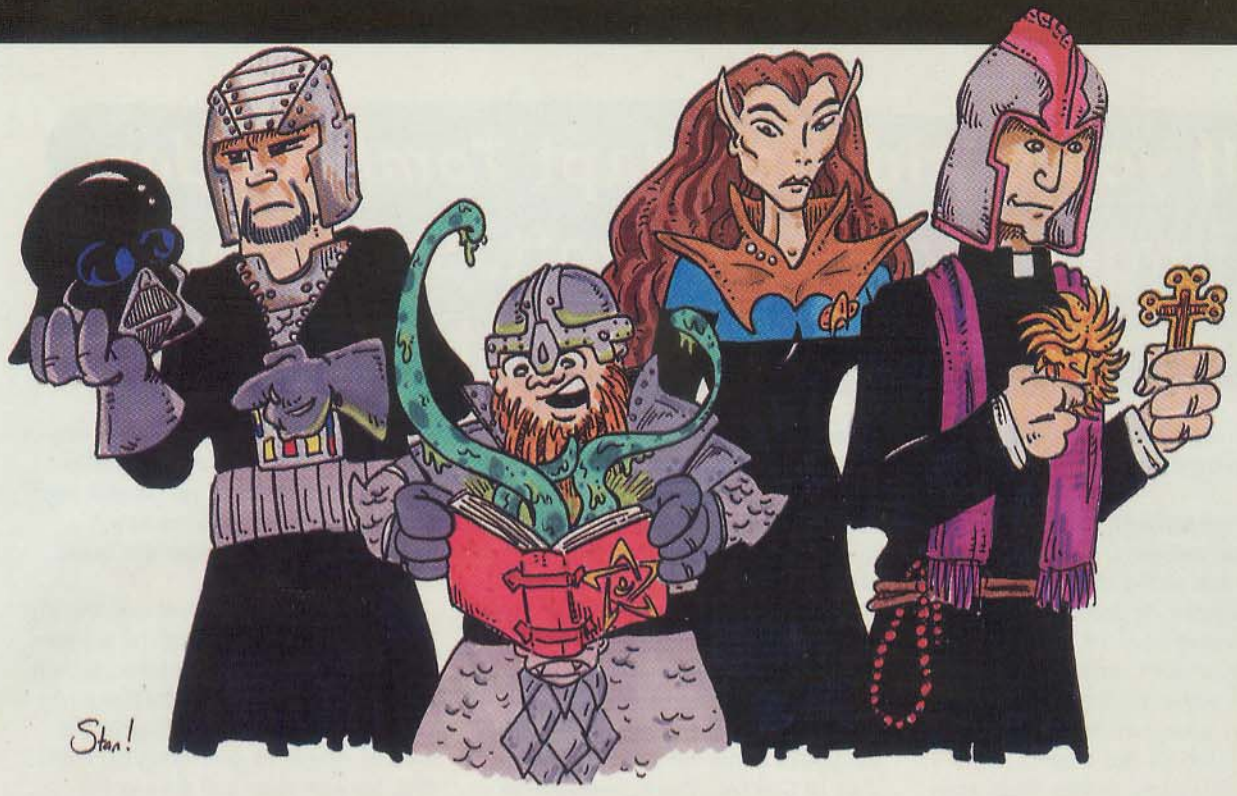
PC Races and Classes: With your players, select a balance of classes, and (if appropriate) races to make that dynamic work.
Examples: A human expert (scientist), ranger (hunter), and bard (TV reporter); human paladins, wizards, and a water spirit or two.

PC Roles: With your players, assess where each character fits in the team and the world around them.
Examples: The scientist leads the group, but the hunter takes over when the shooting starts, and the reporter documents the peril; King Arthur and his knights take counsel from Merlin and the Lady of the Lake.

Starting Level: Start the PCs at a representative level that lets the characters be what they are in the source material, which may or may not be 1st.
Examples: 3rd level dinosaur hunters; 12th level knights and wizards.

Starting Adventure: Plan a representative first game that captures the feel of

We've run games based on *Mystery Men*, *Scooby Doo*,



the theme you've selected, and launch in right after character generation. *Examples:* Velociraptors get loose in Costa Rican village; treacherous Morgana summons a demon which rampages through Shrewsbury.

Continuing Adventures: Sketch out a possible course of the campaign that feels like the journey the characters in the source material would undertake. *Examples:* The dino-hunters trace the cloned dinosaurs back to their source, an evil geneticist wreaking vengeance on the world; Morgana and Mordred enlist many dark co-conspirators in an attempt to destroy the fragile bonds of the Round Table.

Modifications to the Game System: Decide on the smallest possible list of changes you'll make to the mechanics of D&D to make it work, and search the D&D books for options on how you'll accomplish those changes. *Examples:* New guns and dinosaur traps, plus bonus XP for capturing the dinos alive; alternate paladin abilities to distinguish the knights, plus new artifact-level swords and magic wands.

The Maxims of Adaptation

If you're adapting a source into a D&D or d20 game, you might find these maxims helpful.

A modified D&D, not a modified world. If you've picked a source to add to your gaming experience, it's probably because you want to adapt the source for D&D. That's the wrong way to approach it. Find the center of the world, and adapt D&D to it.

Usually, you can find that center in a single word or phrase, called in moviemaking the "high concept." The center of *Warcraft III* is war. The center of *Call of Cthulhu* is investigating scary monsters. The center of *Highlander* is chopping off immortals' heads. Figure out what you're adapting, and then bend D&D to that purpose.

When we adapted *Diablo II* for D&D, we concluded that the center of the game is "kill everything in Hell, and take their stuff." Thus, we focused on creating new ways to kill everything, and Hellish things to kill, and a million-magic-item system of stuff to take. We didn't focus on geopolitics, campaign backgrounding, or long-term character development. We focused on killing everything in Hell, and taking their stuff. Hold that focus in your mind, and everything will follow.

Teams, not individuals. If you decide to adapt *Tomb Raider*, forget about Lara Croft. She's your enemy, and you'll need to kill her. That's because she's the only character that matters. And you can't have that.

Dungeons & Dragons is a team game. A source about a loner doesn't play into that team mentality. In a James Bond game, everybody will want to be 007. That's why *Star Wars* is a better subject for an RPG than Bond (though not necessarily better than a spy milieu). In a *Star Wars* game, somebody can be Luke, somebody can be C-3PO, and somebody can be Chewbacca. Or, if your players make their own PCs, somebody can be the Jedi, somebody can be the robot, and somebody can be the Wookiee.

If your source has a bunch of loners, construct a reason why they need to get together. In a campaign based on Alan Moore's comic book *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the players would play Dr. Henry Jekyll, the Invisible Man, Mina Harker, Captain Nemo, and other heroes banded together in a more-or-less common purpose. In all other contexts, these heroes would never cooperate. But in this case, the tenuous connection of a

Jonny Quest, and even All Your Base Are Belong To Us.

"If you decide to adapt *Tomb Raider*, forget about Lara Croft. She's your enemy, and you'll need to kill her."

superspy organization can hold the campaign together.

Variety, not similarity. Key to holding an adapted campaign together is making sure that all the characters are equally playable. If Jekyll blows away all the characters when he transforms into Mr. Hyde, it won't work. But if Mina has some vague mind control abilities, Nemo has steampunk technology, and so on, everybody has a part.

The D&D game divides these parts up by character class. In some ways, so do most sources. Take the Justice League of America: Superman's a paladin, Green Arrow's a ranger, Green Lantern's a sorcerer, Batman's a rogue (and a monk, and an expert, and... well, you get the idea). Everybody, even Aquaman, is the best at something.

If you don't have this variety, your characters will have a tough time keeping up. If you craft a pirate campaign (as I did based on George Macdonald Fraser's anachronistic satire *The Pyrates*), monitor character creation carefully. If everyone creates a rogue (as they did), they're in trouble. Without healing, attack spells, or significant armor or weapons, such a group won't be prepared for challenges of their level.

Magic, not realism. Brian Jacques's *Redwall* is a novel series about mouse, mole, and hedgehog warriors clashing swords with their evil cat and ferret enemies. This seems like a good basis for a fantasy RPG, except that basically the characters are just men in mouse suits. They don't have any special abilities, and are essentially fighters and occasionally rogues. They can only do what normal warriors can do, and that's not enough for an RPG.

Superpowers, spytech, mutations, witchcraft, alien spacecraft—*something* in your game needs to be magical, beyond the mortal ken. Otherwise, you don't have the balance that D&D provides. If everything comes down to a melee or ranged weapon attack, eventually things will get very dull. Sure, you'll have the occasional critical hit, but if that's all you'll get out of the game mechanics, you won't be playing long.

If the NPCs have all the magic, you can hold the game together a little longer than if there's no magic at all, but just a little. You could build an RPG session out of *The Blair Witch Project*, but you're better off building it out of *Call of Cthulhu*. There, investigators can work beyond the pale, though at great cost. Figuring out how much sanity you should give up is part of the magic of playing in the Lovecraft universe.

The best starting level, not 1st level. No one wants to play Marvel's Avengers at 1st level. Captain America is the greatest warrior America has ever known. The Hulk is the strongest one there is. Iron Man is a super-scientist with armor of unthinkable power. And Thor... well, Thor's a god. These are assuredly not 1st level characters, and if you bust them down that low, you're not playing those characters. Given what this group can do, you might be opening the *Epic Level Handbook* on day one.

On the other hand, you might want to play Harry Potter and his friends at 1st level, because when you first meet them, they're just learning how to be wizards. In that environment, it's plausible that each year of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry might be a level of play, so that when they graduate, they're 7th level wizards. (Advancement may not be as key a feature in some universes as in D&D. The Amazing Spider-Man doesn't necessarily gain a level when he flattens the Rhino. But he does stop the Rhino, and that might just be enough.)

Try to peg the power level of the source you're adapting. Watch what the characters do, not what the characters say they are. A keen observer of *The Lord of the Rings* will notice that wizardry is the province of five godlike wizards in the trilogy, yet Gandalf can't exactly cast *meteor swarm* at a moment's notice. Consider this quote: "I cannot burn snow."

A 1st-level D&D wizard can, though. On the other hand, Gandalf takes down the rough equivalent of a balor, though at great cost. By this logic, I'd peg him as a 10th level sorcerer, roughly the level of ranger I'd give Aragorn. That's fine, because most bad guys in the trilogy are wraiths, orcs, trolls, and so forth. Put the player characters at too high a level, and nothing in the books is a threat.

D&D's systems, not new systems. As anyone who's read the *Psionics Handbook* knows, D&D's spell system can port into another style of magic, the magic of the mind. Such a transference could also work for modern mutant psychics. So if you're playing Professor X, you don't need a new psychic power system. You've got one in the *Psionics Handbook* that's balanced against the rest of D&D.

Make your enhancements to D&D only where you need to match your theme. For *Warcraft III*, the focus is war. The game needs to affect units of troops, not just individuals. So *Warcraft* needed a bunch of new "mass" spells, and a system that allowed a unit to do its average damage against another unit. Everything else should work under the D&D system as it already worked.

You'll certainly have to invent something, of course. Try to do it within the framework of what's already been provided for D&D or other d20 games. Otherwise, you're setting yourself up for trouble. Consider a grafted-on system for lasers that made every 1st-level blaster jockey's beam ignore armor and enhancement bonuses. At 1st-level, the ability to drop a plate-wearing fighter down to AC 10 is broken. That's why

the identical *brilliant energy* special ability in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* has a +4 market price modifier (and is not broken at 15th level). If you model lasers this way, armor as D&D knows it will disappear from the world.

The source's NPCs, not your NPCs. In my 1890s game, my players could have handled fighting a vampire. They could've even handled a noble vampire. But they weren't ready for Queen Victoria to be a vampire. That presented a whole series of moral and political issues, especially since the PCs worked for the British government.

Though you can get value out of players either making up their own characters or using ones from the source, you should definitely use the NPCs the source provides. In my D&D adaptation of *Macbeth* for *DUNGEON*, I set up a tense conflict between dark elves and high elves, with Macbeth as the leader of the drow. The light elves included Macduff, Donalbain, and the other characters from the play. When I ran the game, those familiar with the play knew they were meeting classic characters.

Going to the source is especially important with villains. There's no point in inventing a new badguy alien race in a *Star Trek* game when you've got the Romulans, Klingons, Cardassians, The Dominion, and a host of others to choose from. Your players will want to meet these nefarious sorts, because they rooted against them when they saw the TV shows. Unless you're playing a one-shot game, treat the villains as you would in a serial drama or cartoon show. Even if the player characters kill the villain, he isn't really dead unless there's a body, and maybe not even then. A recurring villain builds tension even when he's not present.

Player actions, not NPC actions. Say you're playing a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* game, but your players have made new characters. If vampires are loose on Sunnydale, your player characters should stake them through the heart. Buffy and the Scooby Gang should not, especially not to save the PCs' bacon.

Movies and books often use the *deus ex machina* to resolve events. Han Solo sweeps in and blasts Darth Vader's TIE fighter, and the audience cheers. But that doesn't work in an RPG. You may not let your players feel in control of the global campaign events, but they should control the action that you're playing in your game session. Give your players the same opportunities and choices that you would in any D&D game. If Vader's on their tail, let them figure out how to handle him.

Still, in some universes, the NPC actions are necessary to get the plot rolling. If Mr. Fantastic had his way, his day would look like this: Get up, brush teeth, research antimatter particle cannon accelerator, go on date with Sue, go to bed. That sequence is always interrupted by Doctor Doom taking over the United Nations or Blastaar attacking from the Negative Zone. It's the PCs' responses to the NPCs' actions that make a game like this thunder along.

"Well, at least this oufit covers my butt!"

Stan!

Your plot, not the source's plot. If you're adapting *Mission: Impossible*, you had better come up with some impossible missions. If you use the same impossible mission that's in the movie (say, a trip through the Chunnel with a helicopter cabled to the back of a train), everybody will see it coming. The mission becomes a lot less surprising, and a whole lot more "possible."

Put the effort into crafting something the players have never seen. Make it up from scratch, or better yet, steal from a related source that your players know nothing about. For a mystery campaign you can borrow from detective novels, true crime magazines, and TV shows like the '70s drama *Banacek*.

In that show, George Peppard played an insurance investigator who specialized in solving impossible thefts: a car disappears off the flatbed of a moving train, for example. In a magical world, that kind of theft becomes even more entertaining, as you strip away the technology but keep the mystery intact.

Maybe the best source to steal ideas from is the truth. For games, I've adapted three accounts from Paul Aurandt's *The Rest of the Story*, a collection of the radio broadcasts made by his father, Paul Harvey. Harvey's stories always have a punchline ("...and that boy grew up to be Roy Rogers"), which makes for a great game. The players in my 1890's campaign were stunned to learn that a real-life author had written a book about an unsinkable ship named the *Titan* which crashed into an iceberg... in 1898. Of course, I made up the time travel element. (Well, at least I think I did.)

Your ending, not the source's ending. Rick tells Ilsa, "You're getting on that plane." That's how it goes, right? Well, no, not necessarily. The first ending shot for *Casablanca* had Rick and Ilsa's

relationship mattering more than a hill of beans. Sixty years later, though, we can't imagine Casablanca ending that way. She's got to get on that plane.

But that's sixty years. Your game takes place now, in real time. Even if you're adapting a book or movie, it's the players' decisions that matter, not the writers of the source material. Your players don't know what's going to happen, because you'll want to send the message that what they know doesn't matter. It turns out that such ignorance about what will happen is liberating, not frustrating. Freed of the constraint to follow through what they know will occur, they can get about to making their own decisions and living with the consequences.

Believe it or not, I actually ran a large-scale game based on *Casablanca* once. If the players knew Ilsa was getting on that plane, it would have made them very unhappy. That's because all the players wanted the letters of transit for themselves. The riot at the airport as the last plane taxied away is one of the most memorable moments of my RPG career. And it sure didn't end like the movie did.

That's the point of it all, really. Continuity be damned, all that really mattered is that players had a great time playing in an environment they loved.

"I don't care how many snacks you're gonna give me ... I'm not wearing a collar!"

Sample Campaign: Dungeons & Detectives

As an illustration of how to put these maxims into practice, here's a campaign I'm running. I wanted to adopt an Agatha Christie mystery style into a medieval setting, similar to the *Brother Cadfael* series by Ellis Peters. Here's what I put together.

Campaign Theme: Solving mysteries in magical, medieval England.

Campaign Setting: London and surroundings in the mid-1100s.

PC Team Dynamic: A police department. Based on what the players wanted to play, we decided that the gnomes and dwarves brought the concept of a police guild down from the Scottish highlands, blazing a new trail for justice and equality.

PC Races and Classes: A dwarf fighter, a gnome fighter, a gnome monk, an elf bard, a human sorcerer/rogue, a human wizard, and a human cleric.

PC Roles: The dwarf and gnomes were cops, under the command of an NPC dwarf fighter/cleric sergeant. The elf was a Stonehenge-born dilettante who'd bought a rank in the police guild, the sorcerer was an aristocratic informant and contact to Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, the wizard was a supplier of tools of the trade, and the cleric was a consultant from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Starting Level: 3rd and 4th. High enough to make the PCs good at their jobs, but not high enough to challenge the big guns in the campaign setting.

Starting Adventure: The PCs investigate the shredding of an aristocrat. A cowering goblin remains in the locked room with the body. He tells of how he and his goblin coworkers each grabbed one of the corners of the rectangular chest in the room, but then something horrible happened, and everyone but him ran away. The goblin foreman says he and another laborer ran down the stairs when the shredding began. Deduction leads to the conclusion that four goblins carried in the chest, but only three remain. What happened? (See the sidebar at the bottom of this page for the answer.)

Continuing Adventures: Investigating the death of an arch-mage in Bristol, keeping the peace in a lawless Southampton, stopping a vampiric bard from bringing the Black Plague to London.

Modifications to the Game System: Though there's combat and danger, the heart of the game is solving mysteries. Thus, I needed an experience system that accounted for catching onto clues and fingering the guilty parties. I divided each mystery into a set of clues, such as "The foreman says four goblins went into the room, but only three came out." If the players picked up on such a clue, they got XP for an encounter of their level. If they beat a foe, they'd either get the clue XP or the combat XP, but not both.

Also, I created a watch detective prestige class to give a couple of players a boost to their detective skills, as well as a manacles-like weapon called the shackles. When the PCs shackled and tanglefoot-bagged a rakshasa and then rolled him in a carpet with two grappling gnomes, I knew this was not your ordinary D&D game.

Who Shredded the Noble?

Elsewhere on this page, author Mike Selinker posed an interesting mystery. Four goblin servitors carried a chest into a room. In that room, a waiting noble was assassinated. Three goblins fled, leaving investigators to wonder what had happened.

The final solution is rather tricky: The fourth goblin was a barghest, who transformed from goblin form, killed the aristocrat, and then *dimension doored away*.

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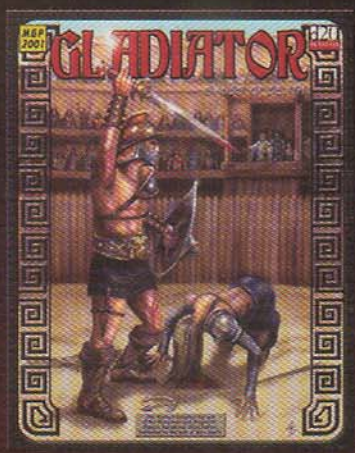
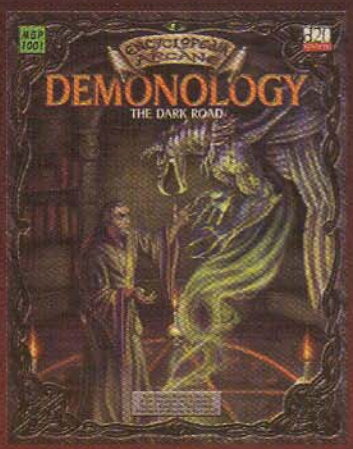
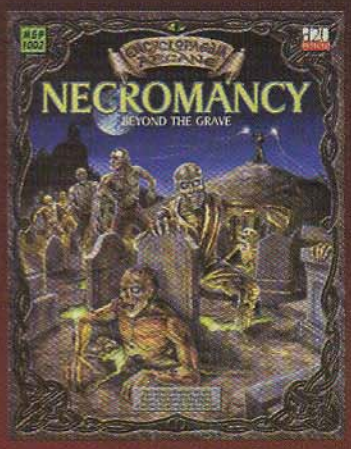
Mongoose Publishing

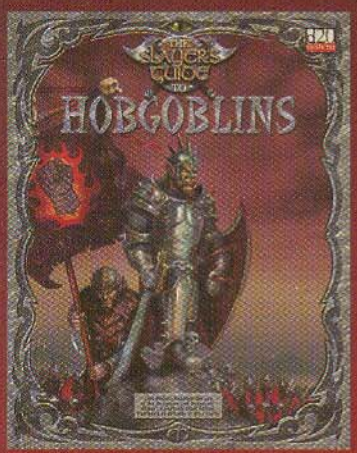
Quis Partem Ichneumonis Cupit?

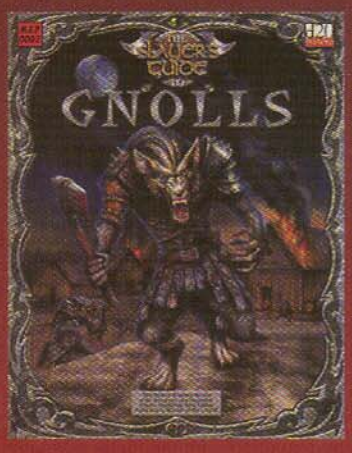
For All Your Adventuring Needs

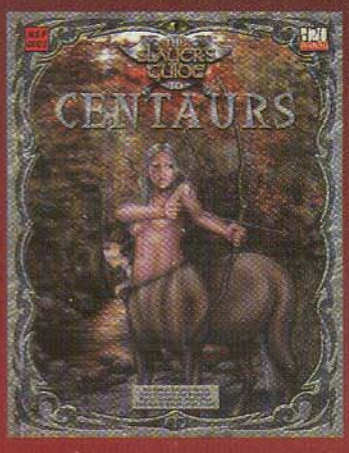


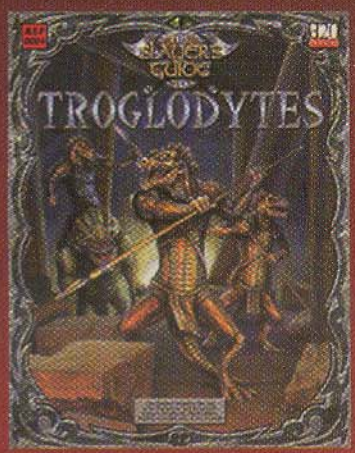












Coming December

Seas of Blood - Fantasy on the High Seas

Ships of the Goblinoids

The Slayer's Guide to Amazons

Pattern

New Hero Templates for the

by Owen K.C. Stephens

The *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game* provides serveral hero templates for players looking to jump right into a campaign. The Great Pattern holds many strands, however, and who can say which heroes might manipulate the Weave as *ta'varen*, and which will end up as food for hungry Trollocs?

The six hero templates presented below offer distinct backgrounds, classes, ability scores, and equipment for starting characters. Where you take them from here is up to you.

Latent Channeler

Ebou Dari Level 1 Wilder

Ability Scores	
Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15	
Hit Points: 7	
Defense: +2	
Reputation: 0	
Skills	
Balance	+5
Concentration	+3
Diplomacy	+4
Heal	+6
Hide	+5
Open Lock	+5
Sense Motive	+6

Feats: Cosmopolitan, The Dark One's Own Luck
Weapons: Dagger
Gear: Masterwork thieves' tools, traveler's outfit
Money: 87 mk
Description: Vivacious and pretty—and certainly much smarter and more common-sensical than the men in your family—you've always had a knack for knowing how people think and getting them to do what you want. When you were younger, you thought this was just because you were persuasive, or because people realized you were right, but you finally realized that there's more to it than that. You actually know how to channel! Somehow, it's the One Power that helps you influence people. Among other uses you've found for your abilities, you make sure that no one knows or remembers enough about your powers to turn you over to the Aes Sedai—the last thing you want is to be sent to the Tower!
Quote: "It's just a little favor I need done, Jasem—won't you do it for me?"

Weavers

WHEEL OF TIME Roleplaying Game

illustrated by Scott Schomburg

Peddler

Taraboner Level 1 Wanderer

Ability Scores	
Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13	
Hit Points: 6	
Defense: +5	
Reputation: 0	
Skills	
Appraise	+7
Bluff	+5
Craft (leatherworking)	+3
Disguise	+7
Forgery	+5
Innuendo	+6
Move Silently	+6
Open Lock	+6
Perform	+3
Pick Pocket	+6
Read Lips	+5
Sense Motive	+6

Feats: Mercantile Background, Mimic
Weapons: Quarterstaff
Gear: Thieves' tools, hooded lantern, crowbar, small steel mirror, backpack, traveler's outfit
Money: 117 mk
Description: You're a peddler, a man who makes his living traveling from village to village and town to town in the westlands and midlands, bringing the locals goods they can't make themselves, and buying what they produce to sell somewhere else for a juicy profit. You throw in bits of news and gossip for free, learning the local scuttlebutt in return. It's a good life, free from entanglements such as a wife or children or the annoying attentions of a Women's Circle, even if it does get a little uncomfortable or dangerous at times.
Quote: "Gather 'round, gather 'round! I've goods to sell and tales to tell!"

Pattern

Saldaean Scout

Borderlander Level 1 Woodsman

Ability Scores	
Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10	
Hit Points: 11	
Defense: +5	
Reputation: 0	
Skills	
Knowledge (the Blight)	+3
Listen	+3
Move Silently	+4
Ride	+6
Search	+3
Spot	+9
Wilderness Lore	+5

Feats: Alertness, Blooded, Track
Weapons: Longsword, short bow
Gear: Mail shirt, 20 arrows, 50-ft. hemp rope, 10 days' trail rations, explorer's outfit
Money: 69 mk
Description: Life in the shadow of the Mountains of Dhoom is often hard indeed. In the summertime, the heat seems to roll down out of the Blight; and in winter, snow blankets the land. But you don't mind, for long experience in the wilderness has made you comfortable there in any conditions. A skilled tracker, hunter, and survivor, you can easily support yourself with your abilities, and you've killed more than a few Trollocs who strayed too far south. But sometimes you wonder if you might not find even greater adventures by going south yourself, into the midlands perhaps, where so much seems to take place these days.
Quote: "There were three of them, all on horseback. Look at this track—that horse is about to throw a shoe. These are only a couple of hours old—with any luck we'll catch them soon!"

Weavers

Seductress

Domani Level 1 Noble

Ability Scores	
Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15	
Hit Points: 8	
Defense: +5	
Reputation: 3	
Skills	
Appraise	+5
Diplomacy	+6
Gather Information	+6
Knowledge (nobility and royalty)	+5
Perform	+6
Ride	+6

Feats: Iron Will, Seductive
Weapons: Dagger
Gear: Courtier's outfit, 2 bottles fine wine
Money: 198 mk
Description: All your life, men have accounted you beautiful—and they're not wrong. From blushing teenage boys to the oldest of greybeards, you've never had any trouble wrapping men around your little finger and getting them to do what you want. Why work when you can get others to do it for you? Your appearance and charm have gotten you this far in life, and they're going to take you even farther.
Quote: "M'Lord is too kind. Perhaps you would like to discuss this further . . . in private?"

OGC Tracker

This article contains no Open Game Content.

Wheel of Time is a trademark of Robert Jordan.

Youngling

Tar Valoner Level 1 Armsman

Ability Scores
Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12
Hit Points: 12
Defense: +6
Reputation: 0
Skills

Climb	+5
Concentration	+6
Intimidate	+5
Swim	+6

Feats: Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Warder's sword), Wealth
Weapons: Warder's sword, poleaxe
Gear: Studded leather armor, signal whistle, whetstone
Money: 139 mk
Description: Due to the skill with arms you displayed at an early age, you were recruited to come train at Tar Valon, so that you might one day join the Tower Guard—or perhaps become a Warder! When the Tower split, with sister fighting sister, you joined with the young Lord Gawyn to help quell the dissent, and thus became one of his "Younglings." You wonder now if you made the right decision, but you know that Lord Gawyn will not lead you astray, and if he decides that the Younglings must make amends for something they did, he won't hesitate to do so.
Quote: "Squad number three, to me! We can flank them on their left if we move swiftly!"

Windfinder Apprentice

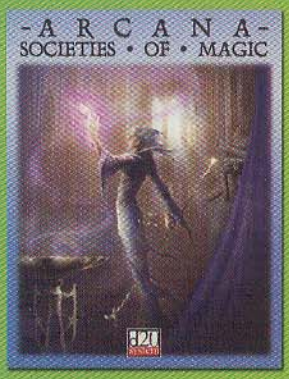
Atha'an Miere Level 1 Initiate

Ability Scores
Str 12, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 10
Hit Points: 3
Defense: +3
Reputation: 1
Skills

Balance	+3
Concentration	+3
Decipher Script	+6
Gather Information	+4
Intuit Direction	+6
Knowledge (nature)	+6
Profession (sailor)	+6
Swim	+7
Weavesight	+6

Feats: Extra Affinity, Extra Talent, Sea Legs
Weapons: Dagger
Gear: 2 healer's balms, hooded lantern, silk rope (50'), fishhook and line, belt pouch, traveler's outfit
Money: 86 mk
Description: As a member of the Sea Folk, you've spent your entire life aboard ships. You've traveled all over the seas, visited at least a hundred different ports, and seen strange lands and creatures most people wouldn't even believe existed. But nothing you've seen compares to the wonder you felt the day you realized you had the ability to channel the One Power. When the Windfinders aboard your ship discovered your talent, they immediately began teaching you, so that you could, in time, succeed them. You haven't completed your training yet, but lately you've experienced an unusual desire to visit some of the land realms and see what they're like away from the coast. Maybe you can take a short break in your studies and satisfy your wanderlust before returning to your ship and family.
Quote: "If I manipulate the wind ... just so . . . won't I be able to increase the speed of the ship without risking any damage to the sails?"

Rules You Can Use!



Arcana: Societies of Magic

Available November 2001

Sorcerers and wizards are not the only practitioners of the magical arts. Esoteric orders of arcane initiates push the boundaries of magic beyond the limits of tomes and blood. The Abbey of Green Steel trains monks that pack a magical punch, the Servants of Decay subvert civilization with dark rites, and The School Behind the Veil teaches warriors to use divination to best their opponents. **Arcana: Societies of Magic** details six different organizations that employ unique styles of magic to achieve their ends. The description of each society includes information of the group's history, goals, hierarchy, and leaders, as well as a map of its headquarters. New skills, feats, spells and prestige classes make it a complete package. Like Green Ronin's award-winning Freeport series, **Arcana: Societies of Magic** can be used in any fantasy campaign.

Freeport: The City of Adventure

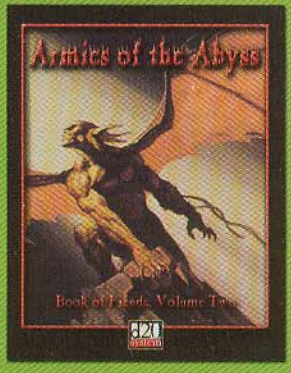
Available December 2001

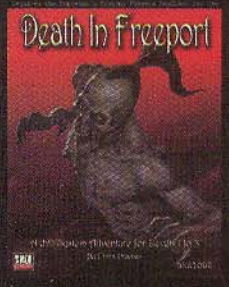
Players and gamemasters alike have been begging for more info on Freeport. The wait ends in December when **Freeport: The City of Adventure** (formerly known as **Secrets of Freeport**) blows the lid off the most larcenous city in fantasy. Game industry veterans Matt Forbeck and Hal Mangold join Freeport creator Chris Pramas for an in-depth look at the people, places, and politics of the city of adventure. Jam packed with info on the city, the Serpent's Teeth, and the sea lanes, **Freeport: The City of Adventure** provides action-packed material for any campaign. The book also includes a full color poster map of the city, beautifully rendered with street-level detail. **Freeport: The City of Adventure** is the must-have sourcebook of 2001!

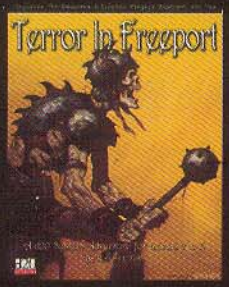
Armies of the Abyss: Book of Fiends, Volume 2

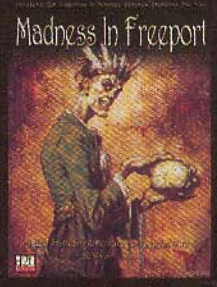
Available January 2002

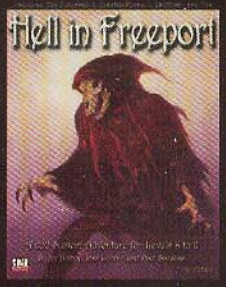
Green Ronin took you to the Pit in **Legions of Hell**, giving devils their due. Now its time to take a tour of the Abyss and get an up close and personal look at the masters of chaos, the demons. An endless variety of demons populate the infinity of the Abyss, and volume 2 of the **Book of Fiends** gives you the lowdown on more than 50 of the vilest outsiders the multiverse has to offer. 3E concept artist Sam Wood leads an all-star assemblage of artistic talent in bringing these beasts to life and complete d20 stats round out the package. **Armies of the Abyss** are on the march!

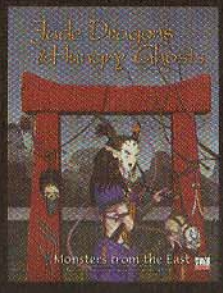












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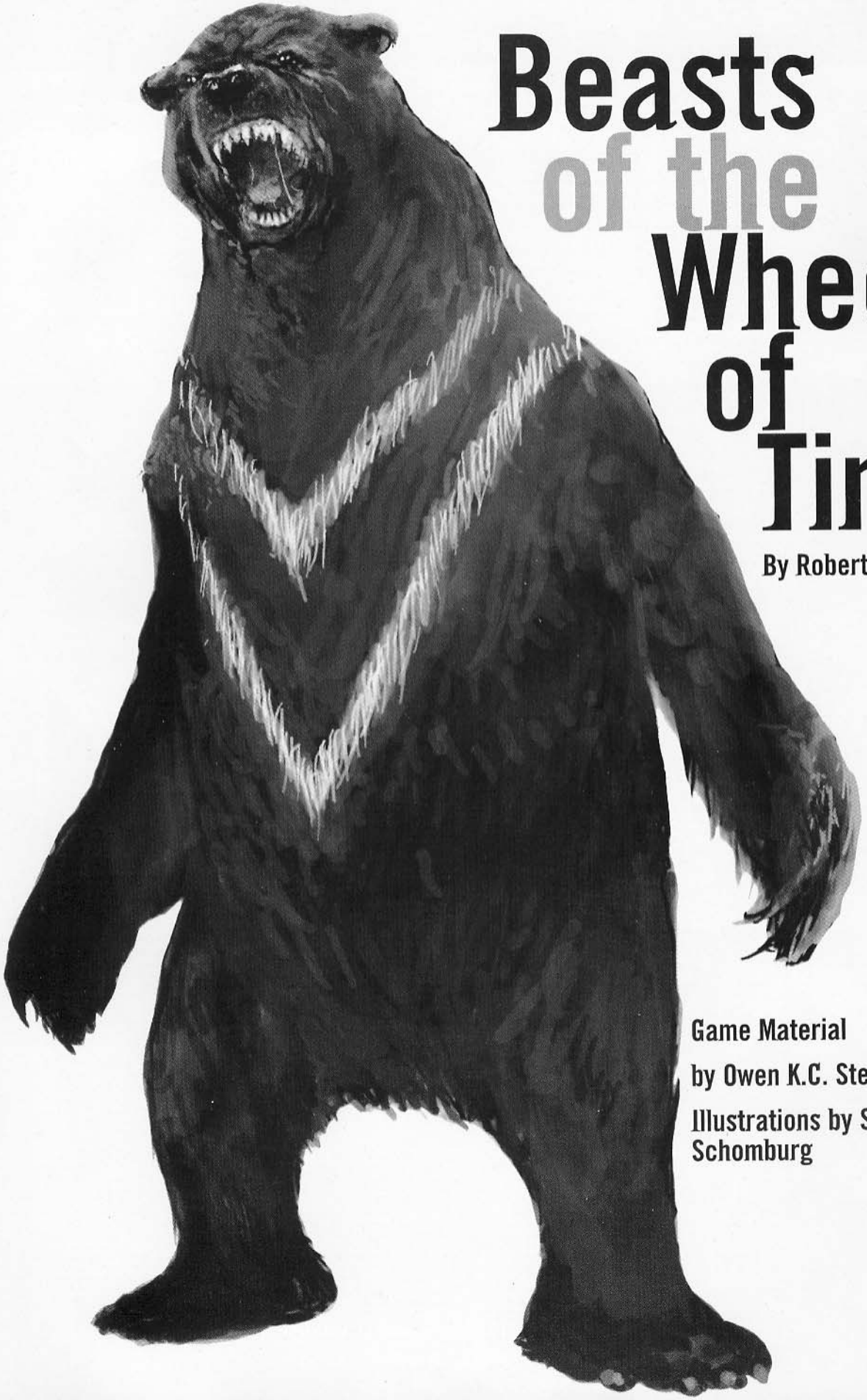


Beasts of the Wheel of Time

By Robert Jordan

Game Material
by Owen K.C. Stephens

Illustrations by Scott Schomburg

Although the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game* presents several creatures native to various lands, these are only a tiny sample of beasts within the world of the *Wheel of Time.* In an effort to include Seanchan exotics and various Shadowspawn, very little room was left for the more mundane fauna of the world that nonetheless can provide challenging encounters in the wild.

Culled from my extensive notes on the wildlife of the world of the *Wheel of Time*, this article presents a representative sample of the types of animals that might be encountered in *Wheel of Time* campaigns that range throughout the Westlands and the Aiel Waste. —Robert Jordan

Bears

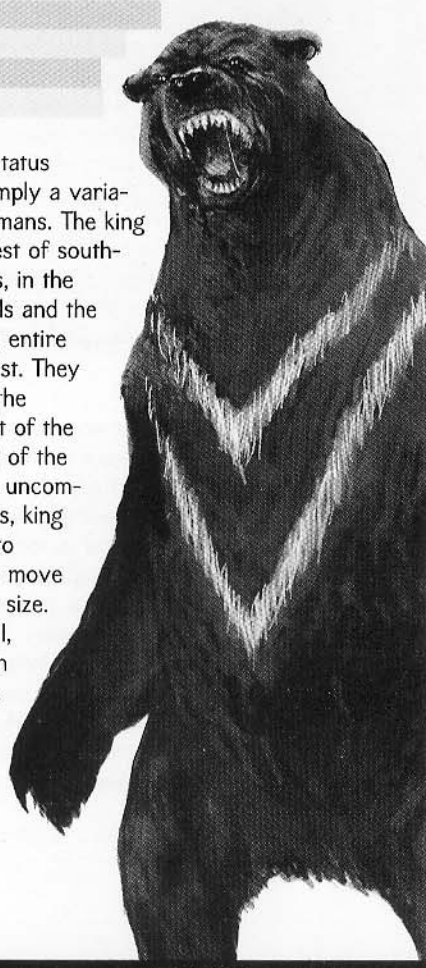
	Black/Brown Bear Medium-Size Animal	King Bear Large Animal
Hit Dice:	3d8+6 (19 hp)	8d8+32 (68 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft.	40 ft.
Defense:	13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)	15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws +6 melee, bite +1 melee	2 claws +13 melee, bite +8 melee
Damage:	Claws 1d4+4, bite 1d6+2	Claws 1d8+8, bite 2d8+4
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 10ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:		Improved grab
Special Qualities:	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2	Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Climb +6, Listen +4,	Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +8, Spot +7, Swim +8
Feats:	Improved Critical (claws)	
Climate/Terrain:	Any forest, hill, plains or mountains	Forest, hill or mountain
Organization:	Solitary or pair	Solitary or pair
Challenge Code:	B	C
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	6-8 HD (Large)

Black/Brown Bear: A number of varieties of common bears, called simply black bears or brown bears, can be found almost anywhere west of the Dragonwall. In the more heavily populated regions, they are quite rare. These bears weigh no more than three hundred pounds at most, with two hundred pounds being more common. Generally solitary (except during breeding season), these relatively shy creatures avoid humans, but are still very dangerous when cornered or provoked. They may run, or they may attack.

Bears northwest of the Dragonwall sometimes exhibit blue-gray or golden-brown fur. Although many refer to such animals as "blue bears" or "golden bears," scholars are certain that these bears represent color phases of the common brown and black bear.

In the Dragonwall itself, there are black bears with white faces, simply called "white-faced bears." They grow to about four hundred pounds, though three hundred seems more common. Little is known of them, as they are rarely seen.

King Bear: Also called the "royal bear" or the "great black bear," king bears can reach a height of ten feet and weigh as much as two thousand pounds, though those sizes are uncommon. The king bear is black with one, two, or three downward-pointing white chevrons reaching across its chest. The markings have no effect on status among the bears; they are simply a variation, like eye color among humans. The king bear can be found in the forest of southern Saldaea, in the Black Hills, in the forests between the Black Hills and the Mountains of Mist, and in the entire range of the Mountains of Mist. They sometimes venture out onto the Caralain Grass, the plains east of the Black Hills, or the plains west of the Mountains of Mist, but this is uncommon. Seemingly placid animals, king bears are nonetheless given to unprovoked attacks, and they move very fast for something their size. A king bear can kill a wild bull, breaking its back or neck with a single swipe of a huge paw.



Boars

	Bladetusk (*lanra*) Medium-Size Animal	*Pecara* Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice:	3d8+9 (22 hp)	2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+0	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft.	40 ft.
Defense:	16 (+6 natural)	15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks:	Gore +6 melee	Bite +3 melee
Damage:	Gore 1d8+6	Bite 1d6+3
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Aggressive, Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2	Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 10, Con 17 Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4	Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4
Skills:	Listen +7, Spot +5	Listen +5, Spot +5
Feats:	–	–
Climate/Terrain:	Desert	Desert
Organization:	Solitary	Pack (12-30)
Challenge Code:	B	A (C for a pack)
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	3-4 HD (Medium-size)

	Sand Pig (*gensa*) Small Animal	Wild Pig Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice:	1d8+1 (5 hp)	3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.	40 ft.
Defense:	14 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1, natural)	15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks:	Gore +3 melee or bite +1 melee	Gore +6 melee
Damage:	Gore 1d6, bite 1d4	Gore 1d8+6
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Scent	Ferocity, Scent
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2,	Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12,Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4	Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4
Skills:	Listen +6, Spot +6	Listen +7, Spot +5
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (gore)	–
Climate/Terrain:	Desert	Any forest, hill, plains or mountains
Organization:	Group (4-10) or pack (12-36)	Solitary
Challenge Code	A (B for a group, C for a pack)	B
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	4-5 HD (Medium-size)

Bladetusk: Also called *lanra* (singular and plural), bladetusks can be found throughout the Aiel Waste. The bladetusk can grow to four hundred pounds, though two hundred is much more common. It is a very lean pig, very quick on its feet, with tusks that can grow as long as six inches. Its hair is much sparser than, though just is stiff as, that of wild pigs west of the Dragonwall. In coloration, lanra range from a sandy brown to darker brown. The very aggressive creatures have been known to circle back and wait in ambush for those hunting them. They are usually found alone, except when breeding or when a mother is caring for her litter. The female bladetusk is particularly aggressive while she has a litter, as even male bladetusks occasionally devour their own tasty young.

Combat

Aggressive: A male bladetusk who has been injured or a female with a litter is particularly aggressive, and gains a +4 morale bonus to all melee attacks and damage.

***Pecara*:** Though similar in appearance to a very thin, angular boar, *pecara* are not properly speaking wild pigs despite being classified as such by wetland scholars. They have no analogue west of the Dragonwall, and are known to the Aiel only by this name. *Pecara* look something like a lean pig, but with short, coarse dark hair. Their snouts are more pointed than those of pigs, and while they have sharp teeth, they have no tusks. They have non-retractable claws on their feet, but fight almost exclusively with their teeth. *Pecara* can grow to three hundred pounds, though most specimens weigh

under two hundred pounds. They travel in groups that include a dominant male, six or eight subordinate males, and perhaps twenty or so females. They do not usually attack people, but are very aggressive if cornered or surprised, and very dangerous. *Pecara* appear to be immune to most of the poisons and venoms of the Aiel Waste.

Sand Pig: Local to the Aiel Waste, the *gensa* (singular and plural), or sand pig, lives mainly on roots, grubs, snakes, and lizards. *Gensa* rarely grow heavier than fifty pounds. Like the *pecara*, they appear to be immune to most of the poisons and venoms found in the Waste. Their dappled coloration, which varies through shades of light browns, gives the *gensa* their common name. Usually found anywhere except the most rocky or mountainous regions, sand pigs prefer to travel in groups ranging from five animals to as many as several dozen.

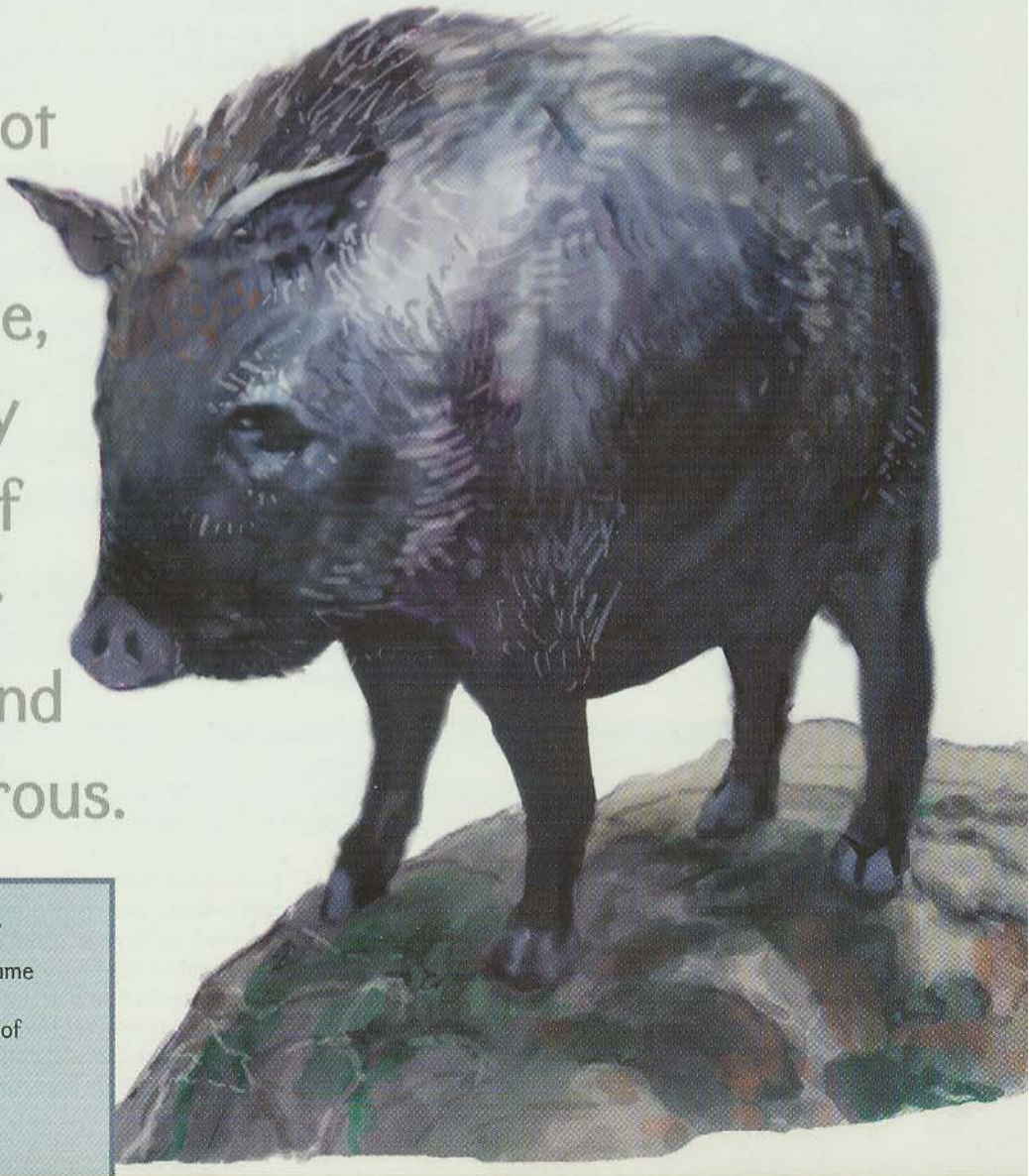
Though *gensa* tend to run from anything larger than themselves, mature male sand pigs do possess small tusks (about an inch long) and can and will take a bite out of anyone who corners or threatens their young. Men have died at the teeth of a group of sand pigs.

Wild Pig: The fearsome wild pig found west of the Dragonwall sometimes reaches a weight of five hundred pounds, though most weigh under four hundred pounds. Their tusks can be as much as seven or eight inches long. Wild pigs are lean animals, with stiff black or dark brown hair/bristles. They are very quick, very dangerous, very aggressive, and have been known to lie in ambush for pursuers, sometimes even circling back on their own trail to do so. The male is extremely dangerous at all times, though particularly so when in rut; the female is even more dangerous than the male when she is carrying or caring for a litter. They are solitary except during breeding season, or when a female is caring for a litter. Their range is all inclusive, from the Borderlands south to the Sea of Storms, from the Dragonwall west to the Aryth Ocean.

Combat

Ferocity: A male wild pig or a female with a litter is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying (see Chapter 8 of the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*).

Pecara do not usually attack people, but are very aggressive if cornered or surprised, and very dangerous.



OGC Tracker

This article contains no Open Game Content.

Wheel of Time is a trademark of Robert Jordan.

Great Cats

	Leopard/Black Leopard Medium-Size Animal	Lion Large Animal	Ridgecat (western) Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice:	3d8+6 (19 hp)	5d8+10 (32 hp)	3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative:	+6 (Dex)	+3 (Dex)	+4 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft., climb 20 ft.	40 ft.	40 ft., climb 10 ft.
Defense:	17 (+6 Dex, +1, natural)	15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)	15 (+4 Dex, +1, natural)
Attacks:	Bite +8 melee, 2 claws +3 melee	2 claws +7 melee, bite +2 melee	Bite +6 melee, 2 claws +1 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d6+3, claw 1d3+1	Claw 1d4+5, bite 1d8+2	Bite 1d6+3, claw 1d3+1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 10ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3+1	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d4+2	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3+1
Special Qualities:	Scent	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +2	Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2	Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 16, Dex 22, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6
Skills:	Balance +14*, Climb +12, Hide +11*, Listen +6, Move Silently +11*, Spot +6	Balance +7*, Hide +4*, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +11* Spot +5	Balance +12*, Climb +11, Hide +9*, Listen +7, Move Silently +9* Spot +7
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)	-	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)
Climate/Terrain:	Any forest, hill, plains or mountains	Any hill or plains	Any mountains
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary or pride (7-12)	Solitary
Challenge Code:	B	C (D for a pride)	A
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	6-8 HD (Large)	4-5 HD (Medium-size)

	Ridgecat (*maerid*) Medium-size Anima	Sandcat (*caisid*) Tiny Animal	Swamp Cat Tiny Animal
Hit Dice:	3d8+3 (16 hp)	1d8+2 (6 hp)	1d8+2 (6 hp)
Initiative:	+5 (Dex)	+4 (Dex)	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft.	50 ft.	30 ft., Swim 20 ft.
Defense:	17 (+5 Dex, +2 natural)	16 (+2 Size, +4 Dex)	16 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +7 melee, 2 claws +2 melee	2 claws +6 melee, bite +1 melee	2 claws +5 melee, bite +0 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d6+2, claw 1d3+1	Bite 1d2, claw 1d3	Claw 1d2-1, bite 1d3-1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 10ft./5 ft.	2 1/2 ft. by 1 1/2 ft./0 ft.	2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks:	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3+1	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3-1
Special Qualities:	Scent	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4	Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 15, Dex 20, Con 13 Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 6	Str 10, Dex 19, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 10	Str 8, Dex 17, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Balance +13*, Climb +11, Hide +10*, Spot +8	Balance +12*, Climb +4*, Hide +8*, Listen +9*, Move Silently +8* Spot +8*	Balance +7, Hide +7*, Jump +3*, Listen +5*, Move Silently +7* Spot +4, Swim +7
Feats:	–	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)
Climate/Terrain:	Any plains, mountains	Any mountains	Any swamp
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Code:	A	A	A
Advancement:	4-6 HD (Medium-size)	2-3 HD (Tiny), 4-5 HD (Small)	2-3 HD (Tiny), 4 HD (Small)

Leopards: In the Westlands leopards are most often found in the unpopulated regions, but sometimes in simply less populated regions. They range all the way from the Borderlands to the Sea of Storms, from the Dragonwall to the Aryth Ocean. Leopards occur in two varieties. One has golden to yellow fur covered with small black spots and the other, called the "black leopard," a deep black coat.

The spotted variety can grow to more than two hundred pounds, but more commonly doesn't exceed one hundred and fifty pounds, and often is no more than one hundred pounds. The black variety can grow to one hundred and fifty pounds, but is seldom seen at more than one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five pounds. Both varieties are very dangerous, and very aggressive. They often attack prey that seems too large for them, like wild cattle, but as they succeed in making a kill as often as do lions, the perception is plainly false. In

Abilities Common to Great Cats

The following special abilities are common among many varieties of great cats:

Pounce: If a great cat leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Improved Grab: To use this ability, a great cat must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake: A great cat that gets a hold can make two rake attacks with its hind legs for the listed damage each. If a great cat pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

some areas, they have been known to enter villages and even unwalled towns, killing dogs, children, and occasionally adults. Both varieties are solitary animals except during the breeding season.

Combat

Skills: *Leopards receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks.

Lions: Most often found in unpopulated or sparsely populated regions, lions range throughout the lands west of the Dragonwall. These large, black-maned felines can reach as much as five hundred pounds, though four hundred is a more common maximum size. Social animals, lions often gather into prides of seven to twelve animals, though young adults are sometimes encountered alone. The Aiel Waste boasts its own, slightly smaller, lion breeds.

Combat

Skills: *Lions receive a +4 racial bonus to Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks.

Ridgecat (western): Distinct from the similarly named cat of the Aiel Waste, the western ridgecat is indigenous to the mountainous regions of the west. Growing up to two hundred and fifty pounds, ridgecats sport pelts of fine gray fur streaked with black, much like a common house cat. Though not particularly aggressive, ridgecats stalk and attack anything they believe they can bring down, including humans. They tend to be solitary creatures, except during the breeding season.

Combat

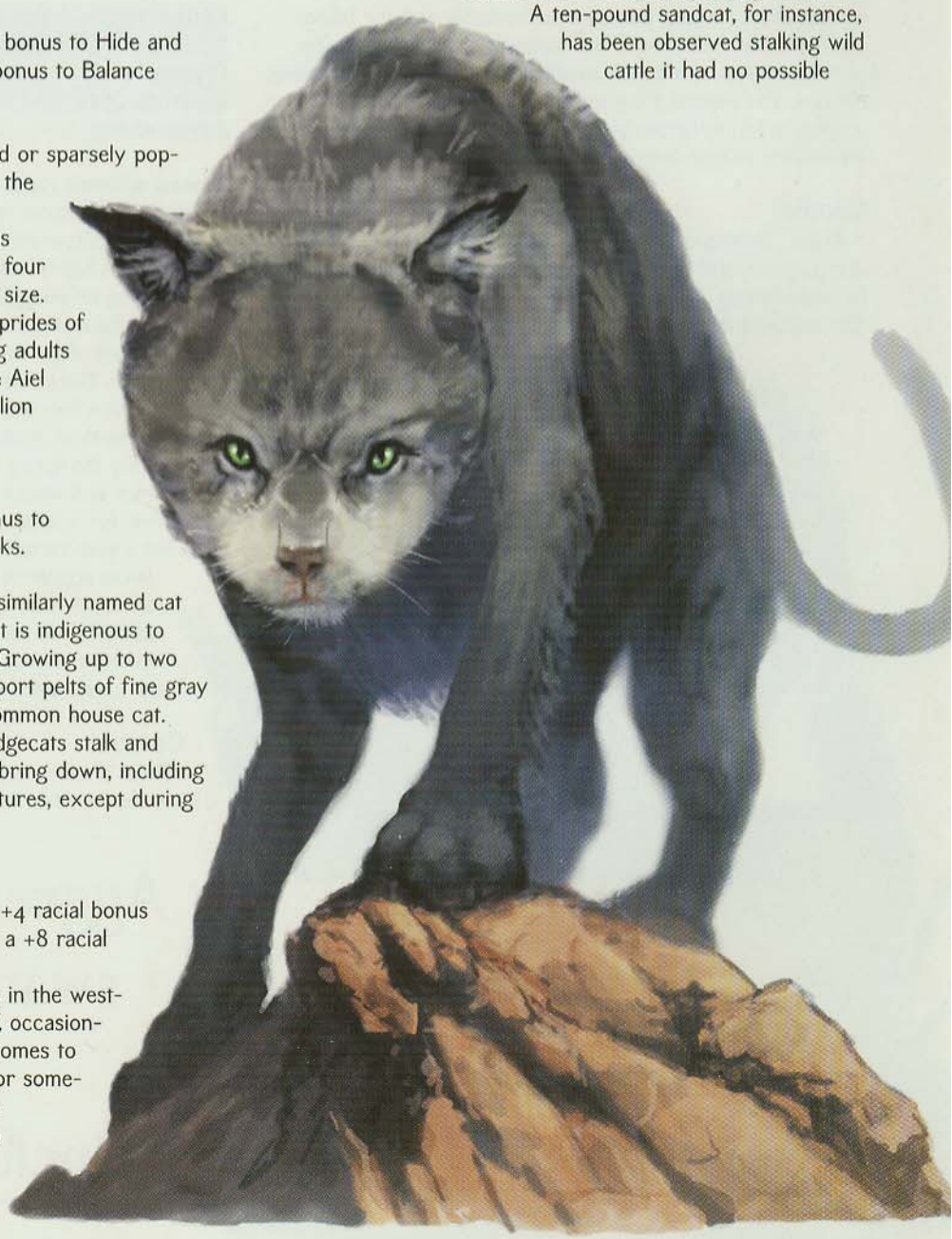
Skills: *Western ridgecats receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks.

Ridgecat (*maerid*): Unlike their cousins in the western lands, the Aiel ridgecat, or *maerid,* occasionally venture from their mountainous homes to the flatlands to seek food. This behavior sometimes brings the cats into conflict with humans, since while the felines seldom attack wild or domesticated cattle, they seem to have few qualms about killing and eating people. *Maerid* commonly weigh about two hundred pounds, occasionally topping two hundred and fifty. Their coloration ranges from a "sandy gray" to a fairly pale gray, with slightly darker stripes than those found on western ridgecats.

Combat

Skills: **Maerid* receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. *Maerid* also receive a +4 bonus to any Wisdom check made to follow tracks with their scent ability.

Sandcat: Those who doubt an animal can possess an oversized ego would do well to observe the behavior of the aggressive sandcats of the Aiel Waste. Small when compared to other cats common to the area, sandcats (also called *caisid*) frequently attempt to attack much, much larger animals in hopes of gaining a large meal. A ten-pound sandcat, for instance, has been observed stalking wild cattle it had no possible



chance of pulling down. When *caisid* focus on prey more within their means to defeat, they tend to favor birds, lizards, shellbacks, and other small game.

Sandcats seldom grow to more than twenty-five pounds, with fifteen being more common. Rare specimens grow to as much as forty pounds. *Caisid* have very large ears (with the attendant acute hearing), large eyes, and feet that seem overly large for an animal of their size. The latter allow the animals to run very fast, even on loose sand.

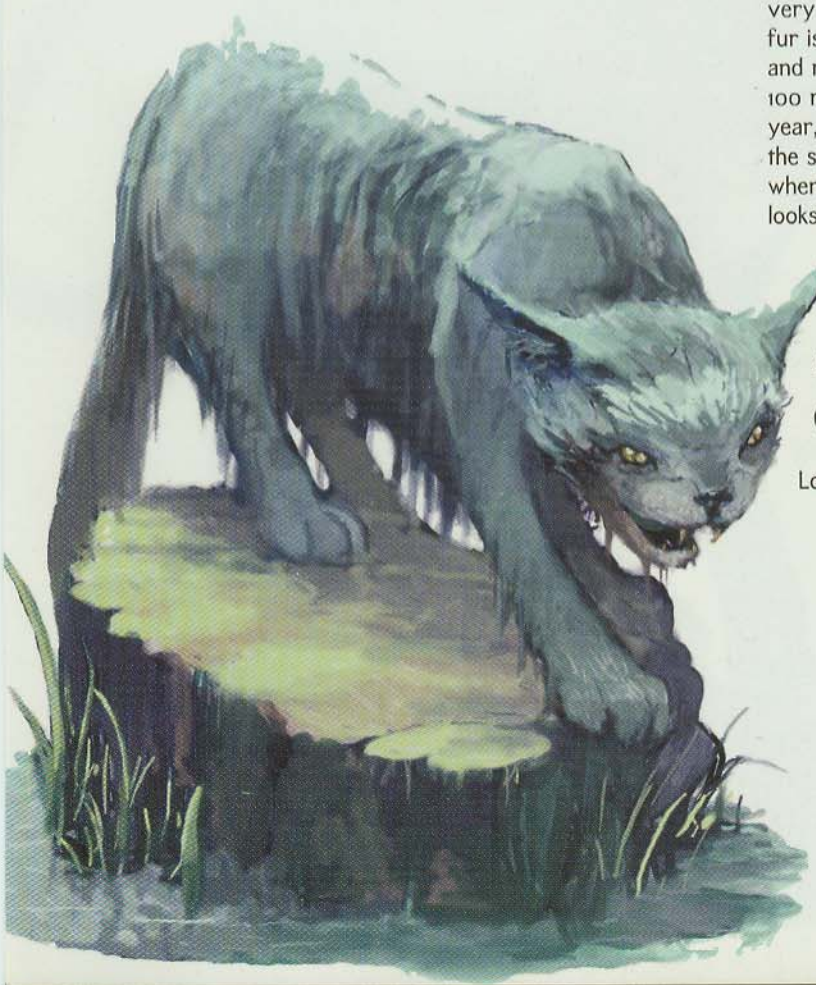
Combat

Skills: *Sandcats receive a +4 racial bonus to Climb, Hide, Move Silently, and Spot checks and a +8 bonus to Balance and Listen checks.

Swamp Cat: The algae-infested coat of the fearless, nasty swamp cat of the Drowned Lands grants the animal's dappled gray coat a greenish cast that allows it to blend in with its surroundings. Swamp cats swim remarkably well for felines, and spend as much time in the water as on land. Aggressive hunters, swamp cats attack anything and everything, including humans. The animals grow to no more than twenty pounds, with weights of ten to fifteen pounds being far more common. They are solitary, except during the breeding season.

Combat

Skills: *Swamp cats receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Jump, Listen, and Move Silently checks. In swampy or forested terrain, an algae-covered swamp cat gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.



Fox

	Small Animal
Hit Dice:	1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative:	+4 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft.
Defense:	15 (+1 size, +4 Dex)
Attacks:	Bite +1 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d4
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Scent
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 11, Dex 19, Con 11 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 8
Skills:	Hide +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +4*
Climate/Terrain:	Any forest, hills, plains or mountain
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Code:	A
Advancement:	–

Several different types of foxes inhabit the Westlands. Red foxes and gray foxes range from the Dragonwall to the Aryth Ocean, from the Borderlands to the Sea of Storms; neither fur is highly valued, although clothing makers use it for trimming or lining cloaks. Found only in the borderlands, snowfoxes have white fur only in winter, when they are a very valuable target for trappers; the rest of the year, their fur is brown. Black foxes are found south of the Borderlands and north of a line drawn horizontally across the map about 100 miles north of Andor. They have a black coat twice a year, during the spring and the fall, that turns pale gray in the summer and winter. Hunters prefer to trap for them when their fur is black and most valued; otherwise the fur looks like a pale version of that of the gray fox. Black-tailed foxes appear to be red foxes except that their tails are black; they are found from the Sea of Storms to as far north as Cairhien, Andor and Almoth Plain. Dishonest men sometimes sell the tails as being from black foxes, and it takes an expert to tell the difference.

Combat

Skills: *Foxes receive a +8 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when using scent to track.

Aggressive hunters, swamp cats attack everything, including humans.

Goats

	Leaphorn (*gaellac*) Medium-Size Animal	Longhorn (*coema*) Small Animal
Hit Dice:	2d8+2 (11 hp)	1d8+3 (7 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft., 10 ft. climb	40 ft.
Defense:	12 (+1 Dex, +1 natural)	13 (+1 size, +2 Dex)
Attacks:	Ram +4 melee	Ram +1 melee
Damage:	Ram 1d4+4	Ram 1d3+1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0	Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 16, Dex 13, Con 12 Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 6	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12 Int 2, Wis 12, Chr 6
Skills:	Climb +13, Listen +3, Spot +5	Climb +5, Listen +3, Spot +5
Climate/Terrain:	Mountain	Hill or mountain
Organization:	Solitary, or herd (3-18)	Solitary or herd (5-30)
Challenge Code:	A	A
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	2-3 HD (Small)

Leaphorn: Also called *gaellae*, this white-furred goat lives only in mountainous areas of the Aiel Waste. It can traverse slopes and cliffs that most humans would not dare to cross. It usually flees men, but can be very dangerous if cornered.

Longhorn: Also called *coema*, this short-haired, brown goat looks much more like the domesticated goats of the Aiel, with horns that can grow to three feet in length. It usually weighs no more than fifty to seventy-five pounds, though the occasional male can be found that weighs close to a hundred pounds.

Shellback

	Small Animal
Hit Dice:	1d8+2 (6 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft., 5 ft. burrow
Defense:	18 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws -1 melee
Damage:	Claws 1d3-2
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Scent
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 6, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4
Skills:	Listen +6, Spot +5
Climate/Terrain:	Deserts
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Code:	A
Advancement:	2-3 HD (Small)

Also called the *gaoerant*, this small herbivore native to the Aiel Waste has four short legs covered in hard scales and ending with sharp claws. A series of hard bands cover the body, and unconnected armored hide covers its head, neck, and long tail. They can dig into the ground very quickly and move beneath the ground by burrowing a tunnel.

Rats

	Soetam Tiny Animal	Sorda Tiny Animal
Hit Dice:	1/2 d8 +2 (3 hp)	1/4d8 (1 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft., swim 20 ft.	15 ft., climb 15 ft.
Defense:	15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)	14 (+2 size, +2 Dex)
Attacks:	Bite +5 melee	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d4-3	Bite 1d3-4
Face/Reach:	2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.	2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Qualities:	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 4, Dex 17, Con 15 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Listen +9, Spot +7, Swim +8	Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite)	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate and warm marsh	Desert
Organization:	Pack (3-10)	Pack (3-10) or colony (10-40)
Challenge Code:	A	A
Advancement:	–	–

Soetam: A peculiar animal of the Drowned Lands, the *soetam* is a very large rat which can weigh as much as fifteen pounds. They live in small packs that generally number no more than eight or ten animals. Although normally scavengers, they attack anything they perceive as injured or weakened.

Sorda: A fairly large rat found in the Aiel Waste, a *sorda* can weigh as much as five pounds. They are nocturnal and usually no threat to humans except for their uncanny ability to get into foodstores, where they defecate on everything they don't eat.

MORTALS STUMBLE IN THE DARKNESS
LEGENDS LIGHT THE WAY

It's like the end of the world

In the north, the nation of Cancri begins to buckle from the weight of the theocracy's oppressive rule- most pray for death, and the rest, for deliverance.

Enemies gather round the proud nation of Milandir, each one eager to pull down its bright towers and humble its defenders. Fear gnaws at Milandir's people, and they begin to lose hope.

To the south, the once mighty Coryani Empire sleeps under an indifferent ruler, while its greatest general bides his time, waiting to seize the throne for his own noble house. The Imperial Court looks on like a flock of carrion crows, ready to pick apart the corpse of the land.

The besieged Patriarch of Coryan works tirelessly to reconcile the beliefs of a dozen splinter sects, each one warring upon the others and poised to tear down the Mother Church itself. Everywhere the speakers for the gods look heavenward for guidance, and hear nothing... but silence.

The scions of the great noble houses harken to the blood of the ancient Valinor in their veins, blood that bids them to serve the gods by ruling over the rest of humanity. Plots born from an ancient treachery begin to reach fruition in the present machinations of emperors and kings.

All over the continent of Onara, strife threatens to tear the nations of man apart.

It's like the end of the old world...

And the beginning of a new.

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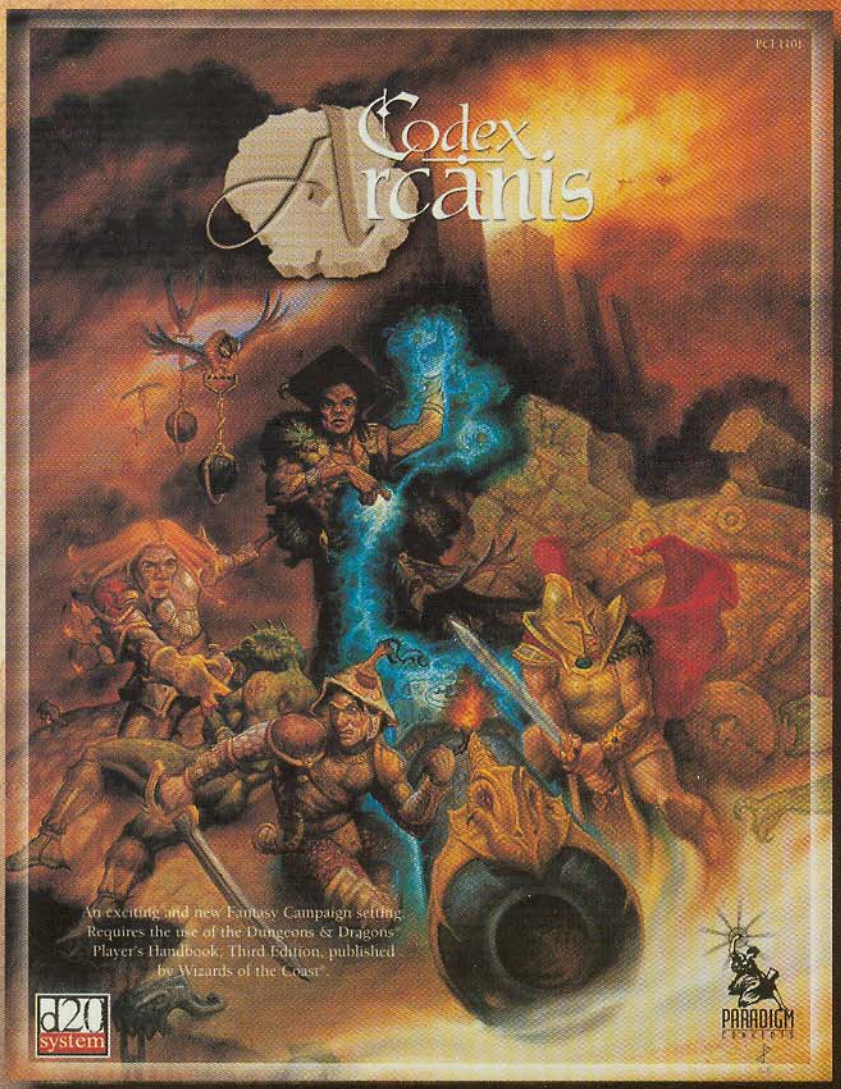
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Snakes

	Constrictors Medium-Size Animal	Snake, Venomous Medium-Size Animal	Two-Step Tiny Animal
Hit Dice:	3d8+3 (16 hp)	2d8 (9 hp)	1/4d8 (1 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)	+3 (Dex)	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.	20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.	15 ft., climb 15 ft.
Defense:	15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)	16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)	17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +5 melee	Bite +4 melee	Bite +5 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d3+4	Bite 1d4-1 and poison	Bite 1d2-2 and poison
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft	5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft.	2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft. (coiled)/0 ft.
Special Attacks:	Improved Grab, constrict 1d3+4	Poison	Poison
Special Qualities:	Scent	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2	Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1	Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13 Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11 Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11 Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +11 Listen +9, Spot +9	Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12 Listen +9, Spot +9	Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +18 Listen +8, Spot +8
Feats:	-	Weapon Finesse (bite)	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Swamp	Desert, forest, hills, plains, mountain	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Code:	B	B	C
Advancement:	4-5 HD (Medium), 6-7 HD (Large)	3-4 HD (Medium)	–

Constrictors: The Drowned Lands, the marshes of Illian, and the marshes through which the Fingers of the Dragon pass all feature constrictor snakes of various sizes, some of which can reach lengths in excess of twenty-five feet. In Illian, these snakes are called "strangling snakes." The fishermen who work the Fingers of the Dragon call them "drowning snakes." While in Mayene, those in the Drowned Lands are called "crushers."

Combat

Improved Grab: To use this ability a constrictor must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict.

Constrict: A constrictor deals 1d3+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a Medium-size or smaller opponent.

Venomous Snakes

Blacklance: The black-scaled blacklance grows to as large as seven or eight feet; it can be found almost everywhere.

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial and secondary damage 1d6 temporary Constitution.

Mountain King: The mountain king grows to about six feet in length. A body of striped red and white rings follows its red head. Their venom causes tremors that progress to cramping and full-body paroxysms before death, which can occur within an hour without treatment. It is found only in mountainous regions.

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial damage 1d6 temporary Dexterity, secondary damage is death.

Scarlet Puffer: The scarlet puffer looks like a mountain king, but with a white head. Named because it swells up when threatened, its venom is not so deadly as that of the mountain king, but a scarlet puffer's bite can still kill without treatment.

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial damage 1d6 temporary Constitution, secondary damage 1d6 permanent Constitution drain.

Hooded Adder: Found only in the Drowned Lands, this five-foot-long snake has a widened area just behind its head, giving it a "hooded" appearance. It is equally at home on land or in the water.

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial damage 2d6 temporary Constitution, secondary damage is death.

Bloodsnake: The bloodsnake is named for its poison which makes the blood coagulate, or "jell."

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial damage 2d6 temporary Dexterity, secondary damage is death.

King Viper/Sand Viper: The king viper and sand viper are essentially the same creature except that the sand viper's brown coloration allows it to hide more easily on sand or in shadows.

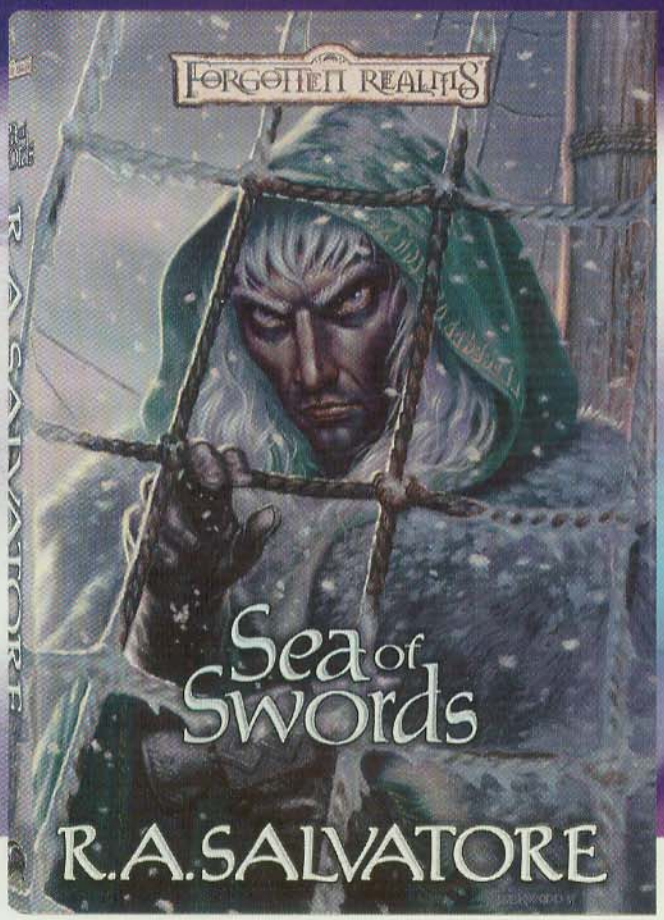
Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial and secondary damage 1d6 temporary Constitution.

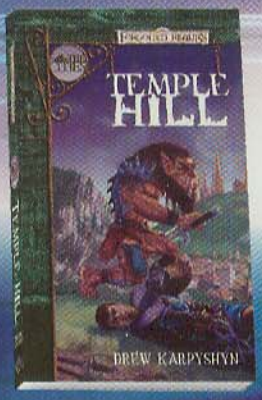
Two Step: This small brown snake native to the Aiel Waste is named for how far a victim normally survives after being bitten.

Combat

Poison: Bite, Fortitude save (DC 10); initial damage 3d6 temporary Constitution, secondary damage is death.



FORGOTTEN REALMS



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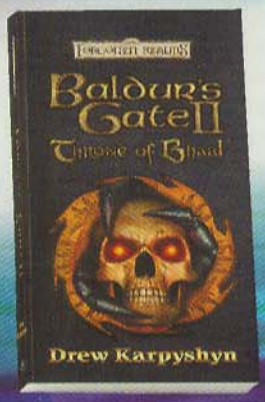

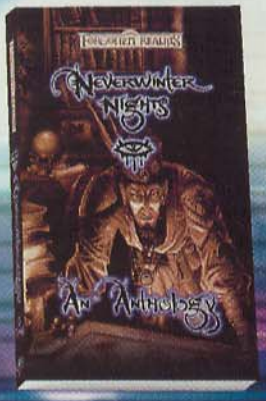

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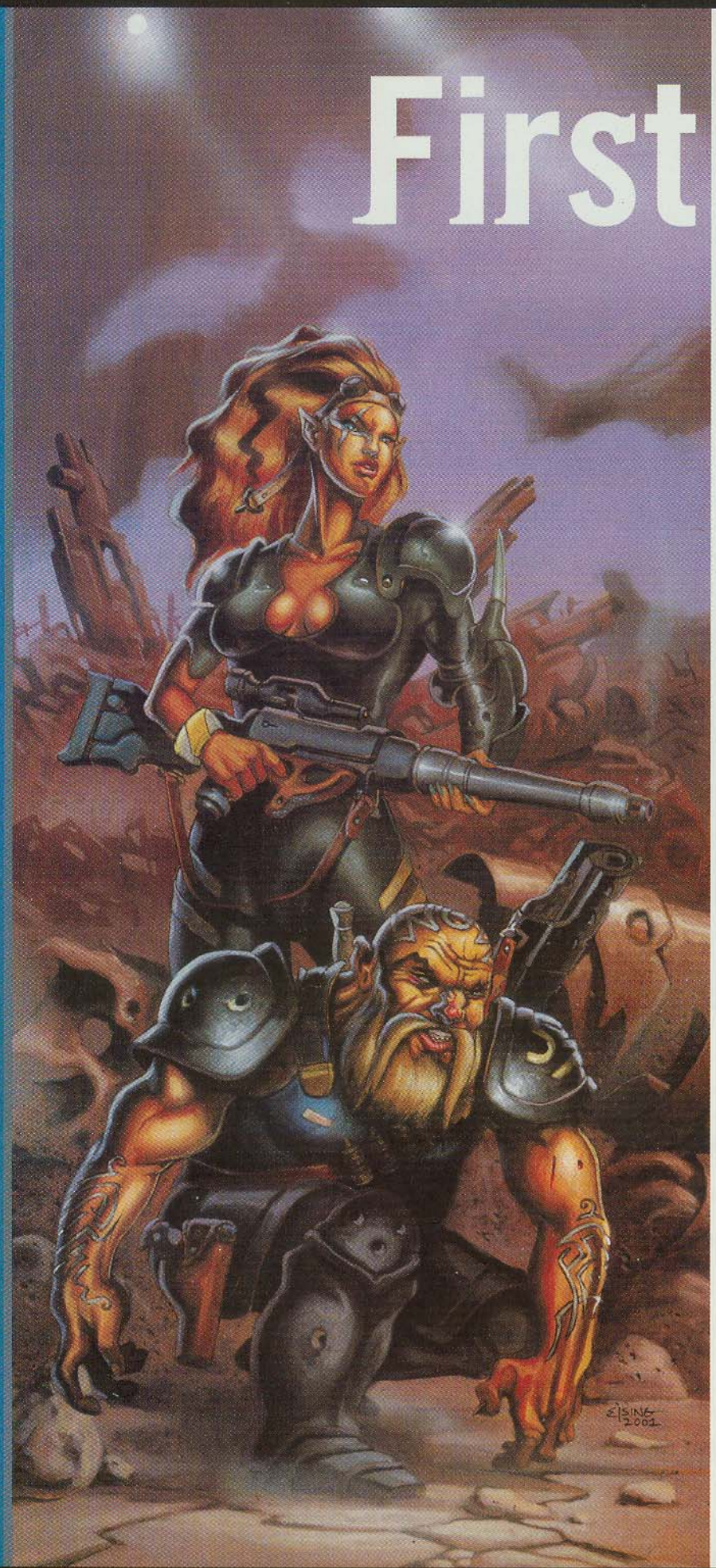


by Greg Benage

Dragonstar is a unique space-fantasy campaign setting for the **d20 System** coming in November from Fantasy Flight Games. *Dragonstar* will be released in two hardcover volumes: the *Starfarer's Handbook* and the *Galaxy Guide*. The *Starfarer's Handbook* supplements the *Player's Handbook*, providing all the rules you need to create a character and outfit him with the latest high-tech weapons and equipment. It also offers a wide range of new skills, feats, classes, spells, and firearms and vehicles rules. The *Galaxy Guide* gives the DM detailed and in-depth information on the people, places, monsters, and magic of the *Dragonstar* universe.

Dragonstar

Dragonstar is a boundless universe of magic and machine, science and sorcery. Intrepid adventurers explore the Outlands in starships powered by fusion fire and arcane rituals. Dwarven prospectors work veins of pure adamantine in remote asteroid belts, and elven loremasters conduct secret experiments in living space stations. Grizzled mercenaries augment their bodies with bioengineered spellware, and orc raiders armed with pulse lasers massacre innocent settlers on isolated colony worlds.

In many respects, the *Dragonstar* universe is much like our own. It is a vast bubble of expanding space-time filled with matter and energy that obey the same laws of nature we're familiar with. This matter and energy is structured, organized into superclusters, galaxies, stars, planets, continents, and a breathtaking variety of living things, both fair and foul.

When the gods created the

Dragonstar

illustrated by Brian Schomburg and Jesper Ejsing

Dragonstar universe, however, they imbued it with magic. They seeded millions of worlds under billions of stars with life crafted in their own image: humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, dragons, and countless other species. The gods gave their thinking children the gift of language and taught them to use both mundane tools and magic to their benefit.

In time, these clever children mastered both. Wizards and sorcerers crafted mighty artifacts and created powerful spells. Clerics honored their gods with divine relics and miracles. Other wise and learned men and women who lacked the ability to work magic studied nature and sought to learn its secrets. These people—philosophers, craftsmen, and inventors, at first, and later scientists and engineers—learned to harness the laws of nature with tools and machines of increasing sophistication and utility.

is a boundless universe of magic and machine, science and sorcery.

The march of progress, of course, did not proceed at the same pace on every world. On some planets, magic was developed to a high art while science and technology remained relatively primitive. On others, people who knew little or nothing about magic built great technological civilizations.

Whether by magic or machine—or most often by both—people inevitably gained the ability to travel between planets and neighboring star systems. These worlds began to trade with one another and exchange ideas. When these peoples first encountered each other, they were astonished at the similarities. The same races were discovered on planet after planet. Their languages were even the same—though dialects often varied considerably—as were their magic and science.

While scientists proposed feeble theories to explain the astounding sameness of life on all these worlds, a prominent religious leader stepped in to offer a more satisfying answer to the mystery. Life was the same from planet to planet because the same gods had created all of it—the universe and everything in it, from inanimate matter to wild beasts to thinking beings. While millions of deities were worshipped throughout the known galaxy, the newly established Universal Church proclaimed that all were merely different aspects of the same beings. According to this new church and its prophet, there were in fact only a dozen True Gods.

This was, at first, difficult for many of the faithful to accept. It was especially problematic because this new religion cut across even racial lines. By the tenets of the Universal Church, the Father of the elves and the Father of the dwarves—gods known by different names to most every elven and dwarven culture ever discovered—were both just racial aspects of the One Father, the Patriarch of the Twelve.

The new religion represented powerful and compelling ideas, themes of tolerance and fraternity that were a perfect match for this age of exploration, discovery, and unification. It became the dominant faith in an ever-expanding interstellar civilization, absorbing new pantheons and religions with every new world that was discovered.

Enter the Dragons

Of course, conflict was inevitable. Wars were fought over politics, economics, religion, race, and countless other issues. These wars were usually fairly brief and isolated to only a handful of worlds. As the prosperity of the growing interstellar civilization grew, it was increasingly in everyone's best interests to keep the peace.

Of all the living things the gods created, the dragons were arguably blessed with the greatest gifts: tremendous strength of both mind and body, powerful magic, and incredibly long lifespans. On most pre-contact worlds, dragons were few and avoided interaction with the civilizations of the other races. Because they were so rare and almost entirely self-sufficient, they tended not to band together in groups larger than small families.

All that changed when the dragons learned to travel between worlds. Suddenly, dragons were not so rare after all. True, their numbers were still far fewer than those of the other major races, but still there were millions of dragons and their kin inhabiting newly discovered worlds seemingly without end. Contact between worlds also introduced new benefits of interaction and cooperation, chief among them the need for security. The dragons realized that they could no longer count on remaining hidden in their remote mountains, deserts, and swamps. They started to get involved.

Dragons were among the first to establish an interstellar political organization based on race. At a great council on the planet Scion III, the metallic dragons founded Qesemet, which means "golden kingdom" in the Draconic language. The great gold wyrm Khelorn was crowned the first king of Qesemet, having received the unanimous support of the attending delegates. The territo-

ries of Qesemet were spread across dozens of worlds, but it offered membership and security to all of dragonkind. The dragons organized into individual clans based on subspecies, but all the clans were ultimately answerable to King Khelorn.

Of course, the chromatic dragons refused to send delegates to Scion III and scoffed at the idea of serving King Khelorn. Led by the blue wyrm Lazalius, the chromatics founded a rival dominion called Asamet, the "iron kingdom." Fearing the unified power of Qesemet, the evil clans flocked to King Lazalius and began to spread the influence of Asamet throughout known space.

Led by the great dragons, the wealth and might of Qesemet and Asamet grew quickly. The twin kingdoms—one light and one dark—soon became the dominant powers in the galaxy. As their influence grew, their relations with each other grew colder: Their worldviews, values, and beliefs were diametrically opposed and could never be reconciled. Inevitably, Qesemet and Asamet made war on each other.

This great war was the most destructive catastrophe the galaxy had ever known—or has known since. Great fleets of warships clashed above forgotten planets, whole continents were riven by powerful magics, and billions died as worlds were crushed under the clawed feet of the great dragon armies. Most other races, nations, and worlds became engulfed in the conflict, allying themselves with either Qesemet or Asamet, usually along lines of alignment. Before long, the terrible war had spread throughout the galaxy.

Finally, it became clear to King Khelorn that the war would never end, that the dragons would exterminate themselves and most of the population of the galaxy along with them. Their artifacts and machines of war were simply too powerful and their hatred for each other too deep. The king realized that if he didn't do something drastic, all would be lost.

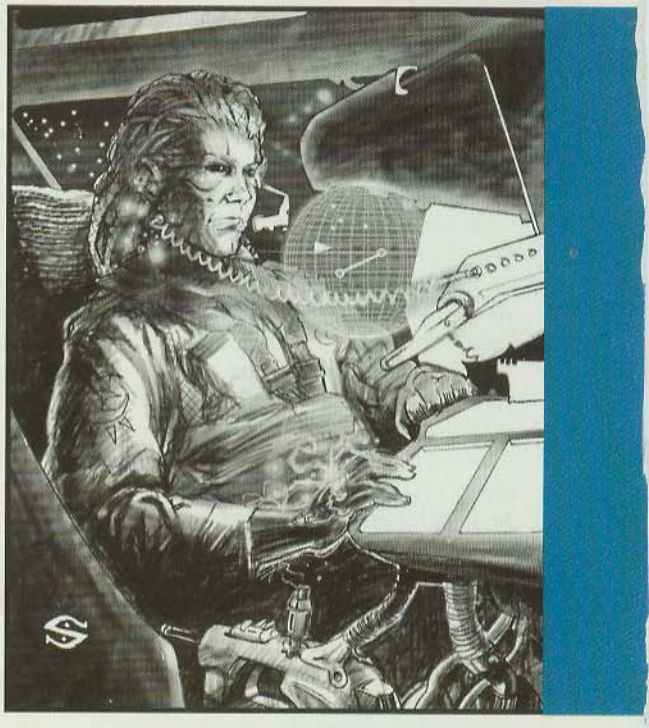
In a moment of sublime humility and wisdom, Khelorn admitted that the war was ultimately his fault. When he founded Qesemet, he'd known the chromatics would not participate, that they would be excluded and would inevitably feel resentment because of it. Despite their differences, dragonkind could only enjoy a lasting peace if a new kingdom were formed in which all were included: gold and red, silver and blue, good and evil. Khelorn also knew that the evil clans would only agree if they were allowed to share rulership of the new realm.

Khelorn called a new council on Scion III, the historic site of the founding of Qesemet. This time, the leaders of all the clans—good and evil—attended. All were wise enough to recognize that they faced extinction if they were not able to forge a permanent truce.

Khelorn proposed the creation of an empire that would span the known galaxy. This empire would be ruled in a line of succession by each of the dragon clans. The elder of one clan would rule for a thousand years and then pass the crown to the successor clan, who would in turn rule for a millennium. While the debates and political battles over the line of succession lasted for months, the leaders of all the dragon clans eventually accepted the proposal. The five clans of Qesemet would rule first, beginning with Khelorn himself. After 5,000 years, the elder wyrm of the red dragons would assume the imperial throne. Blessed with practically immeasurable lifespans, the chromatics were willing to wait and prepare for the day when they would rise to ascendancy over the galaxy.

Many of the leaders of the other races, nations, and world powers were not entirely pleased with the prospect of subservience to a dragon emperor. Through a combination of political pressure, rewards, and outright threats, all but a few isolated frontier worlds eventually submitted. The benefits of citizenship in the new empire—peace, security, and prosperity—were simply too enticing to ignore... and the price of defiance simply too high. Scion III was renamed Draconis Prime and the Dragon Empire was born.

Dragonstar is set a little more than 5,000 years after the birth of the empire. The known galaxy has enjoyed five millennia of peace under the benevolent dragons of Qesemet. Now, it has been 40 years since the great red wyrm Mezzenbone assumed the imperial throne. While the transition of power to the lords of Asamet was peaceful, the empire is already struggling under the lash of the new tyrant. The emperor has formed a secretive bureaucracy whose mission is terror and oppression in the guise of law and order. The ranks of the Imperial Special Police Directorate are filled with the emperor's drow allies who aided Asamet during the war. While the ISPD enforces the emperor's will at home, the Imperial Legions have embarked on an expansionist crusade along the Outlands frontier, bringing more and more worlds within the grasp of Mezzenbone's cruel talons.

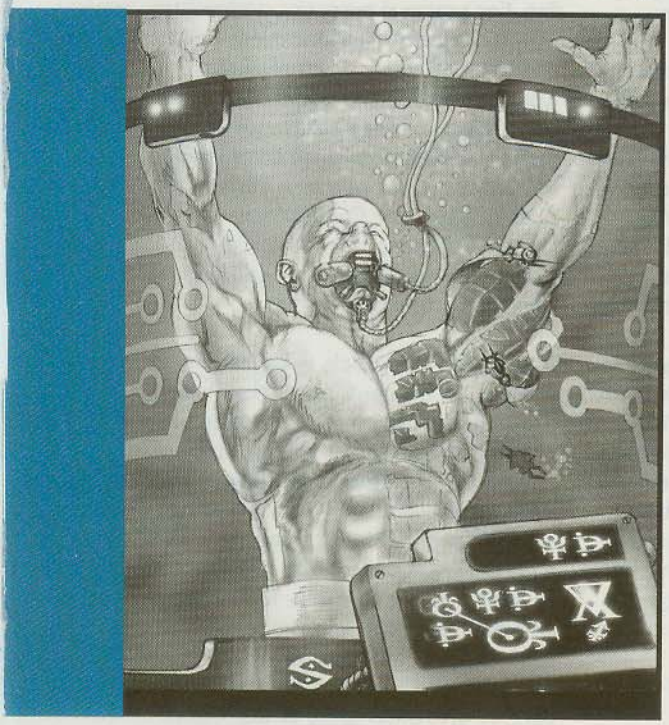


The *Dragonstar* campaign setting

The twin kingdoms—one light and one dark—

offers a whole galaxy of adventure. You can explore strange and exotic worlds and make first contact with their denizens. You can wander the Outlands hunting savage monsters and crusading against evil. You can pilot a free trader between the stars, hauling cargos of all kinds—mundane and magical, legal or illicit. You can enlist in the Legions and fight for the glory of the empire, or join the growing resistance movement to battle the tyranny of the dragon emperor.

Prepare to take your adventure to the stars!



spellware

Magic items play as big a role in a *Dragonstar* campaign as they do in traditional fantasy settings. Your character can win magic items in battle with Imperial Legionnaires, discover them in lost cities on forgotten planets, or liberate them from the hoards of terrible monsters.

Some of these items are truly ancient and are usually recovered from Outlands worlds: wood-carved wands and staves, weapons of stone, iron, and steel, alchemical potions in quaint glass or ceramic vials. Other magic items were produced using the high technology of the Empire: Wands and staves may be manufactured with plastic or carbon fiber, while weapons are forged with titanium or other high-strength alloys. While these items are often more technically sophisticated than their counterparts found in the Outlands, they are never mass-produced. Magic items must be created by individual spellcasters working long hours and sacrificing some measure of their own life energy. Even in the Empire, you won't find such people working on assembly lines.

In addition to these familiar treasures, *Dragonstar* introduces a new category of magic items: Spellware. Spellware is a form of arcane biomodification, a process of imbuing magical effects not in inanimate objects but in living, organic beings. Using spellware, characters in *Dragonstar* can enhance their existing abilities or gain new ones they could never otherwise possess.

In some ways, spellware works just like other magic items. For instance, spellware can be suppressed by certain spells and effects (e.g., *dispel magic, antimagic field*). In other ways, spellware is very different from conventional magic items. When it is implanted in a patient, spellware becomes an integral part of that character or creature. It cannot be damaged directly and never has to make item saving throws to resist damage. Of course, if the character's body is destroyed, the spellware is irrevocably destroyed, whether or not the character is subsequently raised or resurrected. Finally, while there is a limit on the type and number of conventional magic items a character can use at one time, there is no limit on the number of spellware enhancements a character can receive.

creating spellware

Just as with other magic items, creating spellware requires spellcasters to invest time and money into the project. They must also have a new item creation feat, called Implant Spellware. The creator must also have ranks in Profession (surgeon) and must make checks against this skill to successfully implant the enhancement.

The big difference between spellware and other magic items, however, is that the spellcaster does not expend his own life energy (represented by XP) in its creation. Instead, the patient who is receiving the implant must pay the XP cost.

The spellware creator must have access to a special laboratory. These facilities often combine elements of a wizard's workshop and a medical clinic or biotech lab. Implanting spellware takes one hour per 1,000 credits (1 credit=1 gold piece) in the enhancement's base price, with a minimum of one hour. Long, complicated procedures must be broken up into eight-hour operations. The creator can perform one such procedure each day, and he cannot rush the project by working longer. The creator can implant only one enhancement in a single patient at a time and can do nothing else while operating. The creator must work every day until the operation is complete—he cannot take a day off in the middle of the project. Any interruption that would ruin the creation of a conventional magic item also ruins the spellware operation, and all materials used and XP spent are lost.

The creator must make a Profession (surgeon) check each day during the project. The check's DC is determined by the complexity of the spellware enhancement the creator is implanting.

Spellware	DC
Routine	10
Simple	12
Average	15
Sophisticated	18
Complex	20

If the check succeeds, the operation has gone as planned and the creator

became the dominant powers in the galaxy.

has made normal progress for that day. If the operation required eight hours or less to complete, the spellware has been successfully implanted. Otherwise, the creator must make another check on each subsequent day until the operation is complete.

If the creator fails a check, he has made no progress for that day. If he fails by 5 or more, supplies and materials are lost and the creator must pay one quarter of the spellware's market price to replace them.

Spellware typically costs one-half the market price in credits to create. This money is spent on a variety of arcane and medical supplies and equipment necessary for the procedure. The subject in whom the spellware is implanted must also pay the XP cost, which is 1/25 the market price of the enhancement.

For example, the *darkvision* enhancement has a market price of 18,000 credits. This is the amount your character will have to pay if he goes to a reputable clinic for the enhancement. The creator spends 9,000 credits on the supplies and equipment necessary to implant the spellware. The patient must also expend 720 XP when the enhancement is implanted. The operation will take 18 hours. If the creator fails his Profession (surgeon) check by 5 or more, he will have to pay 4,500 credits to replace lost materials and equipment before trying again.

Implant Spellware [Item Creation]

You can modify and augment living beings with spellware, such as *darkvision* and *enhanced strength.*

Prerequisites: Spellcaster level 5th+, Technical Proficiency.

Benefit: You can create any spellware whose prerequisites you meet. Implanting a spellware enhancement in a patient takes 1 hour for each 1,000 credits in its price and costs half its price in raw materials, supplies, and equipment. The recipient of the spellware must spend 1/25 of the enhancement's price in XP.

You can also upgrade certain enhancements. Doing so costs half the XP, half the materials, and half the time it would take to implant the spellware in the first place.

Some spellware enhancements cost extra credits or XP as noted in their descriptions. These costs are in addition to those derived from the enhancement's base price. You must pay this cost to implant or upgrade the spellware.

Technical Proficiency [General]

You either hail from or have lived in a technologically advanced civilization for a significant period of time.

Benefit: You can use common high-tech devices, such as communicators and holovids. You can also learn to use high-tech weapons, computers, vehicles, and other complex or specialized equipment with the appropriate training.

Normal: Without this feat, a character cannot use high-tech devices without instruction. Such characters cannot choose feats or learn skills that have Technical Proficiency as a prerequisite.

Special: This feat it typically not chosen when a character is eligible to select a new feat. Characters who hail from a high-tech civilization such as the Dragon Empire gain this feat for free when they are created. Characters from Outlands worlds may take it for free once they have spent one full level gaining experience with advanced technology. A character could meet this requirement by adventuring in the Empire, training at an imperial enclave on an Outlands world, or traveling with others who are equipped and experienced with high technology.

Spellware Enhancements

Antitoxin: Runic surgery and arcane organ augmentation render the character immune to all natural poisons, toxins, and venoms. The spellware has no effect on magical or supernatural poisons. *Caster Level:* 7th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *neutralize poison*; *Market Price:* 84,000 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

Aquaform: This full-body modification is popular with sailors, divers, explorers and others who routinely operate in marine environments. The procedure involves extensive runic surgery and biomodification of the character's respiratory system and body. The character's lungs are imbued with the ability to extract oxygen from water as well as air. The ability operates continuously and the character can remain submerged indefinitely without fear of drowning. The character's hands and feet are lengthened, and webbing formed from cloned tissue is implanted between the digits. The character is considered a native of marine environments and is able to swim at a speed of 30 feet. The character gains a +8 circumstance bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or maneuver. The character can always choose to take 10 when swimming, even if rushed or threatened. The character also can use the run action while swimming as long as he swims in a straight line. For practical purposes, a character with the *aquaform* enhancement is limited to an effective depth of about 500 feet: any deeper and the absence of light and extreme cold requires further spellware enhancements, such as *darkvision* and *elemental resistance.* *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *alter self, water breathing*; *Market Price:* 37,500 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

Aura Mask: For people in covert or criminal occupations, protection from alignment-divination magic is often crucial. This enhancement operates continuously, and its effect is identical to an *undetectable alignment* spell. The downside of the *aura mask*, of course, is that a concealed alignment can often be as revealing as one that isn't. Rumors suggest that select ISPD agents are given spellware that operates as a *misdirection* spell, allowing them to redirect and deceive divination spells at will. *Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *undetectable alignment*; *Market Price:* 18,000 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

Biosculpting: This enhancement involves cosmetic surgery, modification, and arcane biotherapy. The procedure offers a significant improvement in the character's physical appearance and personal appeal. The character gains a +2 enhancement bonus to all Charisma checks and Charisma-based skill checks. *Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *change self*; *Market Price:* 3,000 cr; *Check DC:* 15 (average).

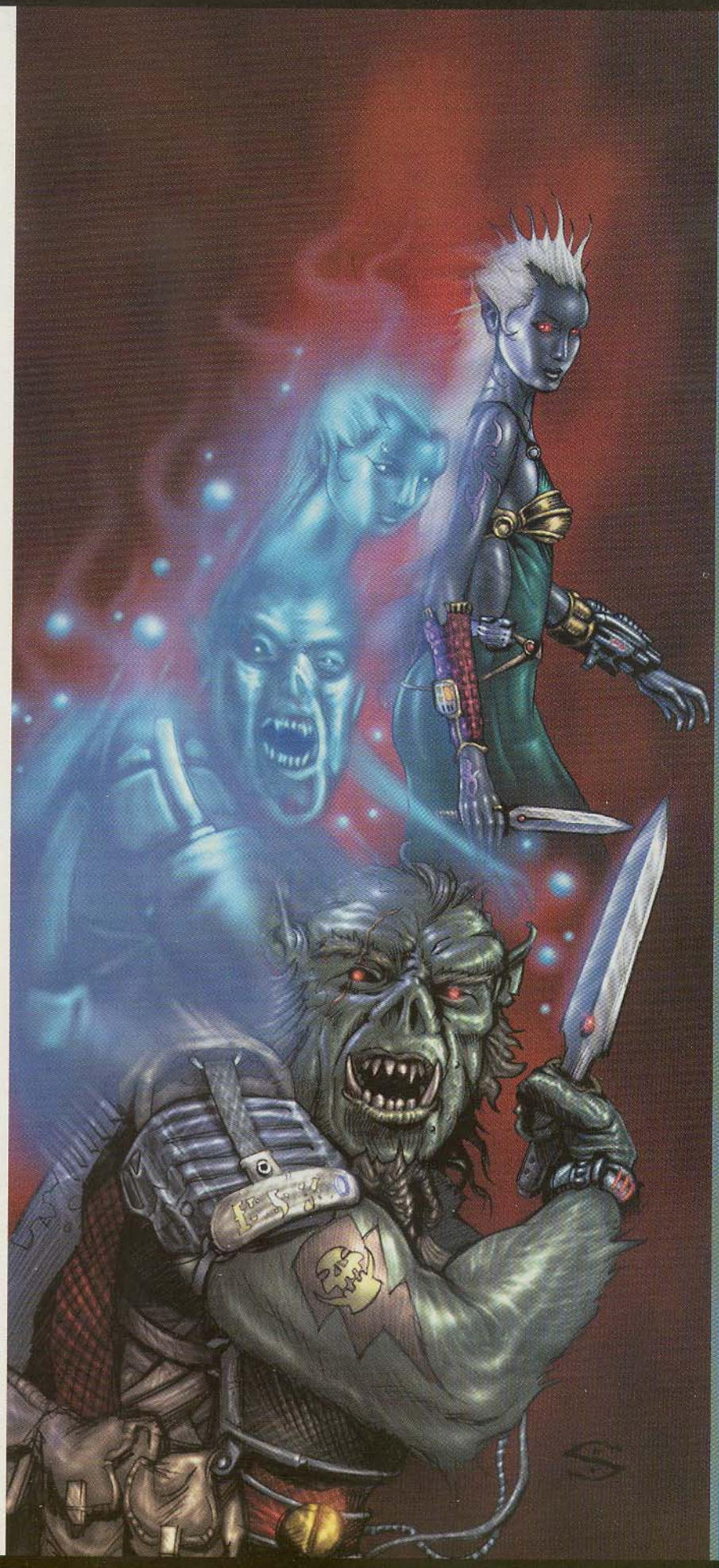
Boosted Reflexes: Pilots, soldiers, operatives, criminals, and others who rely on their reflexes to survive often favor

the boosted reflexes enhancement. Runic surgery and tissue modification enhance major neural pathways, allowing nerve impulses to travel faster and with greater coordination. Boosted reflexes grant the character a +2 enhancement bonus on initiative checks and increases his speed by 10 feet. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *cat's grace*, *expeditious retreat*; *Market Price:* 13,500 cr; *Check DC:* 20 (complex).

Darkvision: The character's eyes and optic nerves are modified and enchanted through runic surgery. The subject gains the ability to see 60 feet even in total darkness. Darkvision is black and white only but is otherwise like normal sight. This enhancement does not grant the character the ability to see in magical darkness. *Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *darkvision*; *Market Price:* 18,000 cr; *Check DC:* 15 (average).

Dermal Armor: Runic surgery is used to modify and reinforce the character's skin and muscle tissues. The character gains damage reduction 10/+1. It is rumored that the empire has developed more sophisticated versions of this spellware enhancement, but they are thought to be reserved for the elite troops of the Imperial Legions. *Caster Level:* 12th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *stoneskin*; *Market Price:* 84,000 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

Doppelganger: This full-body modification requires extensive runic surgery and arcane tissue grafts. The character gains the ability to alter his appearance as if he were the target of a *change self* spell. Activating the spellware is a move-equivalent action. The magic affects not only the character's body but also his clothing, armor, weapons, and equipment. The character can alter his height by up to 1 foot, can look fatter or slimmer, and can manipulate other minor physical traits. The character cannot alter his apparent body type. The effect is an illusion (glamer) and does not alter the perceived tactile or audible properties of the character or his possessions. *Doppelganger* spellware therefore will not fool advanced security systems, such as voiceprint analyzers or thumbprint scanners. If



the character uses the *doppelganger* modification in conjunction with a disguise, he gains a +10 circumstance bonus to the Disguise check. The effect lasts until the character deactivates it. The illusion can be maintained even while the character is asleep or unconscious, but it drops if the user dies. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *change self*; *Market Price:* 15,000 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

Elemental Resistance: This enhancement is a must-have for soldiers, adventurers, and law enforcement officers who routinely come under fire from high-tech energy weapons. Runic surgery and biomodification imbue the character's body with the ability to disperse one type of harmful elemental energy. The character can ignore up to 12 points of damage per round from this energy type. The character must select the energy type before the procedure is performed. Multiple enhancements that protect against different energy types can be implanted, but each must be purchased separately. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *resist elements*; *Market Price:* 18,000 cr; *Check DC:* 20 (complex).

Enhanced Strength: Genetically engineered tissue implants and arcane runic surgery significantly increase the character's physical strength. The character gains a +2 enhancement bonus to his Strength score. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *bull's strength*; *Market Price:* 6,000 cr; *Check DC:* 15 (average).

Flight: This full-body spellware enhancement imbues the character with the ability of flight as if he were the subject of a *fly* spell. The character can fly with a speed of 90 feet (60 feet if the character wears medium or heavy armor). The character can ascend at half speed and descend at double speed. The flying subject's maneuverability rating is good. Using the *fly* enhancement requires as much concentration as walking, so the subject can attack or cast spells normally. The flier can charge but not run, and it cannot carry aloft more weight than its maximum load, plus any armor it wears. The ability to fly is based on magic rather than aerodynamics, so it is unaffected by environmental variables such as atmospheric pressure and gravity. A character with the *flight* enhancement can fly in the vacuum of deep space or in the gravity well of a gas giant. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *fly*; *Market Price:* 45,000 cr; *Check DC:* 18 (sophisticated).

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The Implant Spellware feat and the names and game mechanics of spellware enhancements are designated as Open Content. All other material in this article, including all text and illustrations, is designated as Product Identity. *Dragonstar* is a trademark of Fantasy Flight, Inc.

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Retractable Claws: Those with the *retractable claws* spellware enhancements possess a set of six-to-eight-inch long razor-sharp talons, usually crafted of high-tech carbon fiber or titanium, implanted into bioengineered sheaths in one of their hands and forearms. When retracted into their sheaths, self-sealing openings conceal the blades within the forearms. Retracting or extending the claws is a partial action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Retractable claws are considered light weapons. The wielder cannot hold anything in the same hand she uses to make a *retractable claw* attack. *Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *alter self*; *Market Price:* 3,000 cr; *Check DC:* 12 (simple).

Weapon
Retractable claws
Damage
1d6
Critical
x2
Range Increment
—
Size
S
Weight
3lb
Type
Slashing

Spell Resistance: Delicate and time-consuming arcane biotherapy renders the character resistant to magic spells. The character gains SR 15. *Caster Level:* 9th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *spell resistance*; *Market Price:* 67,500 cr; *Check DC:* 20 (complex).

Translator: This enhancement involves extensive arcane modification of the speech centers of the character's brain. The spellware functions just as if the character were the subject of a *tongues* spell. It grants the character the ability to speak and understand the language of any intelligent creature, whether it is a racial tongue or a regional dialect. The character can speak only one language at a time, although he may be able to understand several languages. The *translator* enhancement does not enable the subject to speak with creatures that don't speak. The character can make himself understood as far as his voice carries. This spell does not predispose any creature addressed toward the subject in any way. *Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware, *tongues*; *Market Price:* 45,000 cr; *Check DC:* 20 (complex).

Trauma Symbiote: A living organism implanted in the character's abdomen, the *trauma symbiote* imbues its host's body with its own life force. This magical energy protects the host's body from all forms of physical injury, providing the host with 20 extra hit points. Damage taken by the host is applied to the *symbiote* first. The *symbiote* is treated just like any living creature. If reduced to 0 hit points, it no longer protects the host. If the *symbiote* drops below 0 hit points, it is dying. The player must roll each round to stabilize the *trauma symbiote*, otherwise it loses 1 hit point. If it reaches -10 hit points, it dies. The *symbiote* can be healed normally, including by natural and magical healing. The *trauma symbiote* heals 2 hit points per day regardless of the user's level of activity. A character may never have more than one *trauma symbiote* at any one time. *Caster Level:* 12th; *Prerequisites:* Implant Spellware; *Market Price:* 9,000 cr; *Check DC:* 10 (routine). D

Greg Benage, d20 Line Developer for Fantasy Flight, Inc., authored the Instant Adventure The Hidden Vault *and contributed to* Raven Mine, Traps & Treachery, *and* Mythic Races. *His most recent work can be found in the* Dragonstar Starfarer's Handbook *and* Galaxy Guide.

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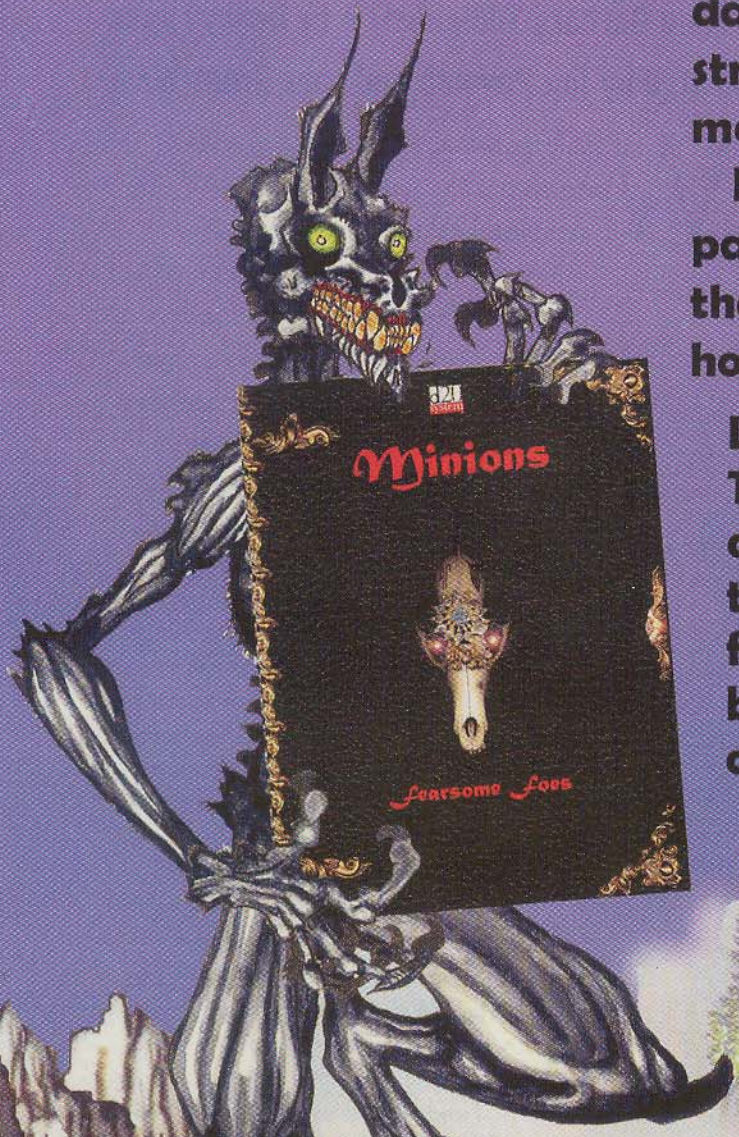

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The Black Talon Ss'ressen

(An *Arcanis Guide* compiled by Sir Armind Gerhard Tildighast) • by Henry Lopez

illustrated by Jim Pavelec and Lars Grant-West

Whilst traveling to join an expedition into the catacombs of the First City, I was shocked to find lawlessness running rampant in the Duchy of Tralia. Bandits had absconded with some village knick-knack or holy relic. I really didn't bother to inquire, as peasants do babble so when excited.

I leapt upon my horse and charged after these rapscallions, trailing them into the Sulfur Marsh, a foul-smelling region of Duke val'Holryn's realm. I eventually made my way through the mire and, discovering the outlaws' camp, I unsheathed my sword and readied my flintlock. Yet before I could have at these brigands, the villains were beset by the Black Talons.

The lizardfolk's speed and grace were wonders to behold. They seemed to appear magically, dropping from trees or striking from beneath the waters. Within moments, those bandits not slain were soon whimpering their surrender.

I made myself known, and the leader of the Ss'ressen, one Shatterscale, welcomed me. Perhaps noting my noble bearing, the beastie invited me to sup with them at their village before accepting custody of the bounders.

I accepted, of course, while doing my best to conceal my revolt at spending more time than necessary in the miasma of the Sulfur Marshes.

Damned propriety.

History

In ancient times, the Empire of Ssethregore dominated the entire continent of Onara. Whatever species it could not subjugate, it wiped from existence. Ruled by serpent men, several other species of sentient reptiles held positions of power, including the naga, the troglodytes and the Ss'ressen, the lizardfolk of Arcanis.

The Ss'ressen were placed as officers of the scaled armies of the Empire, leading hosts of troglodytes into victory after victory. But still, the serpent men were not satisfied. Using the same dire eldritch rituals used to create the elves, the sorcerous Ssanu caste of the serpent men began to experiment on the egg clutches of the Ss'ressen. After years of experimentation, different species were bred to serve the different needs of the Ssethregorans. These new breeds ranged from the now-lost Dark Crest egg clutch to those still in existence to this day: the Barbed Tail, the Flaming Tongue, the Venomous Scale, and the Black Talon egg clutches.

While each of these different breeds of Ss'ressen excelled in one specific task, it was the Black Talons that surprised even the Ssanu with their versatility. These Ss'ressen were able to perform a large variety of tasks, from leading troops into battle to scouting to spying and assassinating enemies.

Declaring success, the Ssanu turned their attention to other matters, not realizing that they had given their star experiment one additional quality: a conscience.

In the years following the overthrow of the Ssethregoran Empire and the serpents' subsequent exile into the Kraldjur Morass, the Black Talon Ss'ressen began to question the fallibility of their leaders with greater frequency. A new philosophy began to blossom within the egg clutch, one which saw the endless cycle of brutality and fear as needless and wasteful.

The Teachings of the Dragon

During this time of inner turmoil, the Matriarch of the Black Talons received a vision from a flaming spirit she called the Fire Dragon. Within the sacred flame that nurtured the eggs of her people, the Matriarch saw a burning wyrm, small in stature yet exuding great power. It whispered to her of a different life for her children, of the tyranny of the loathsome serpent men, and of the idea of compassion.

The Matriarch was also warned that if she and her people followed the words of the Dragon, great sacrifices would be required before deliverance would be granted. Yet, should her people be worthy, a new and better life would be the birthright of all those who would follow.

The Matriarch began to teach the words she heard to the rest of the Black Talons, and soon a change began. Many flocked to see the Fire Dragon and left with a new sense of spirituality, as if a veil had been lifted from their eyes. Though still as aggressive and menacing as ever, the Black Talons began to take a more thoughtful approach to tasks rather than blindly following orders.

This new way of thinking was put to the test during a punitive action against a fellow egg clutch. The Dark Crest had suffered an endless string of defeats at the hands of the warm-bloods, and the Emperor Narthsslik decided that an example should be made of these failures. As the elite of the Ss'ressen, the Black Talons were ordered to destroy all the eggs and slay the Matriarch of the Dark Crests, thereby extinguishing that line forevermore.

For the first time in its millennia-long history, the Emperor of Ssethregore was denied by one of its subjects.

In a tersely worded message sent back with the serpent man emissary, the Black Talons refused, stating that the complete extermination of a people was an act of thoughtless brutality. Enraged, the emperor first ordered the egg clutch of the Venomous Scale to exterminate the Dark Crests, while the vicious Barbed Tail clutch was sent to deal with the traitorous Black Talons.

When the Barbed Tail arrived at the Talons' settlement, they found the Matriarch and several of the clutch's warriors waiting to greet them. The Matriarch first attempted to explain their reasons to their fellow Ss'ressen, suggesting that they could join together in brotherhood against their oppressors. She spoke passionately of the Dragon's words and promise of a better life for all Ss'ressen.

The leader of the invading egg clutch's answer was to decapitate her with one swipe of his spiked tail.

A blood-crazed frenzy erupted then, as the Black Talon warriors who stood beside the Matriarch as well as those who laid in ambush fell upon their enemies. Obsidian blades slashed through scaly hide and in mere moments, the vanguard lay dead at the Talons' feet.

But the Barbed Tails came prepared for a full assault, and a wave of spined lizard men washed over the small number of defenders. The Talons fought on bravely and savagely. When their weapons lay broken and their shields shattered, they launched themselves even more ferociously than before, attacking with tooth and claw.

In the end, despite battling as never before, the Black Talons fell beneath the overwhelming numbers that opposed them. This confused the leader of the Tails, as he had expected scores of warriors to defend their Matriarch, not a mere handful. He was shocked to find that the remainder of the Egg Clutch had vanished. More importantly, so had their eggs.

Exodus

The Matriarch of the Talons knew that refusing the emperor's command was a death sentence, but she trusted in the Dragon's words and knew that this was the great sacrifice of which It had spoken. The Fire Dragon spoke of a location, many leagues to the north, where It had prepared a place for them. Its light would guide them and Its warmth would nurture the clutch's eggs until they arrived there.

The Matriarch knew that one of the fleeing young hatchlings was a female being groomed to replace her and continue the Talons' lineage. Confident that the clutch's future was assured, she decided to stay and face those who would come. She would attempt to sway the other Ss'ressen, but knew in her heart that they would not listen. She and those few who would stay by her would try to buy as much time as possible for the rest to escape.

The fleeing Ss'ressen managed to elude the pursuing Ssethregoran warparties long enough to finally cross into the southern province of the mighty Coryani Empire. Here, they hoped, they would have the safety promised by the Dragon.

Yet instead of finding peace in the humid, sweltering heat of Abessios, the humans harried them on sight. For too many years had the people of this southern territory been at war with the reptiles to even entertain the notion that these Ss'ressen came in peace.

Further and further north they trav-

eled, ever following the flaming trail that the Dragon left for them in the evening sky. As the weeks dragged on into months, never once did their faith waver, as it was the Dragon's breath that kept their eggs warm even in the coldest of nights, in accordance with Its promise.

After months of avoiding patrols of warm-bloods, slinking through wetlands and hiding in rivers, it appeared that the cold winter months would spell the doom of the Black Talons.

Milandir

But even as the frigid season approached, the Fire Dragon did not forsake Its chosen people. In a vision, it appeared to all the members of the Black Talons, rousing them from their lethargic state, urging them onward. It told them that only the weak and unworthy would lay on the cold ground and die, while the strong would let the passion of their hearts drive them on to the Promised Land.

Through sheer force of will, the Talons lurched on, foot after excruciating foot, the strong carrying or dragging the others as best they could. Unexpectedly, a warm slush met their next step. As they penetrated the wetland further, the air grew warmer, removing the chill from their muscles. Water bubbled from underground springs. Instantly, they knew that the Dragon had been true to Its word. It had delivered them to their new home.

It was not long before the humans of the region noticed the newly settled tribe of lizard men and moved to investigate. Duke Artur val'Holryn led knights of the Order of the Phoenix into the Sulfur Marsh, seeking to engage this new menace to his people. Luckily, the duke was a thoughtful man and did not blindly attack these beings. Instead, he observed them building and caring for their young, not preparing to make war upon his lands.

Against the advice of his seconds, the duke waded in with but two of his men, forbidding the knights to advance or show any hostile intent. After a few tense moments and the judicious application of an enchantment to aid communication, the duke and the young Matriarch of the Black Talons came to an agreement. The duke would grant the area of the Sulfur Marsh to the Ss'ressen in exchange for their swearing fealty to him and the crown of Milandir. They would be left to their own devices, unmolested by all, but would be expected to levy warriors in times of need.

The Ss'ressen readily agreed.

Since that day, over a century in the past, the Black Talon Ss'ressen have become an invaluable resource to the Kingdom of Milandir. In both the Heretic War and the Coryani Conflict, they served courageously, their tenacity in battle gaining them a reputation as formidable adversaries. In turn, the Milandisians have honored the duke's pledge by treating the Talons honorably and as valued subjects.

Physiology

Ss'ressen are cold-bloodied reptiles with the ability to regulate their body temperatures to a certain degree. They thrive in a hot and humid environment, but suffer when exposed to extreme cold, as their bodies become sluggish and lethargic.

Due to their internal bone structure and tail, Ss'ressen have difficulty sitting down. They are most comfortable kneeling, usually with their tail wrapped comfortably around their legs.

Ss'ressen are hatched from eggs laid by the Matriarch of the clutch. Only this particular female has the ability to lay eggs, which may be as many as fifty to a season. After emerging from these large eggs, hatchlings quickly reach maturity. By the end of their tenth year, they are considered adults by the rest of the community and are given all the rights and privileges thereof.

To generate the heat needed to hatch eggs, Ss'ressen build huge incubation chambers in which a large fire or heat source is maintained. Within, females (using their sense of smell) determine which eggs will hatch males and which females. It is a cultural bias—about which Ss'ressen males are ignorant—that female eggs are purposely situated closer to the heat source.

Ss'ressen priestesses long ago discovered that the greater an egg's exposure to heat, the more likely it was to produce an intelligent hatchling. This unique trait allows the community to specifically hatch particular types of Ss'ressen to replenish losses suffered. If the clutch requires warriors, priestesses set eggs midway in the chamber. If the clutch requires Ss'ressen who can channel divine or arcane energy, eggs are set closer to the heat source. When a Matriarch grows old, one female egg is brought to the fire's very edge.

Before a young Ss'ressen becomes an adult, it must endure its first Shedding. At this time, the first layer of warty scales begins to peel off, exposing the thicker hide of an adult. Unfortunately, an associated itchy sensation has a tendency to aggravate the young Ss'ressen. During this time, Ss'ressen are at their most dangerous, as they are quite irritable and very aggressive. This molting process continues through life roughly every decade or so. Black Talons undergoing subsequent Shedding are expected to control their temper, showing greater maturity than their younger counterparts.

Though not amphibious, Ss'ressen are comfortable in both land and water. This ability to adapt to their environment has given many an enemy a most unpleasant surprise, as Ss'ressen have developed the technique of the ambush to an art form.

Ss'ressen also have a highly developed sense of smell, complementing their excellent eyesight. A Ss'ressen taking in the scent of a friend or foe is analogous to a human taking a long, hard look at someone.

Government and Religion

The Black Talons have expanded their population from the original settlement to include a number of villages dotting the Sulfur Marshes. This swampland makes the ideal habitat for the Ss'ressen, as hot springs from a nearby volcanic range keep the temperature balmy year 'round.

When a village reaches a certain density, certain members of the population instinctively begin to migrate to another location within the swamp. A new Matriarch must be hatched for the new colony to be self-sufficient, and

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The Tail Attack feat, Saurian domain, Holy domain, and the game mechanics of the lizardfolk subraces presented here are designated as Open Content. All other material in this article, including the word "Ss'ressen" and all text and illustrations, is considered Product Identity.

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the queen from the parent settlement usually senses the need and arranges for this to occur.

Ss'ressen view their Matriarchs as lifegivers of each successive generation, and these special females lead each settlement. Males give deference to the wiser females, but still maintain a position of power within the community in the role of protector and provider.

Each settlement boasts a Warlord, a male counterpart to the Matriarch who organizes all able-bodied warriors in the protection of the settlement and who serves as the Matriarch's consort. The Black Talons' agreement with Milandir requires their Warlord to lead levied Ss'ressen troops into battle outside the march when so commanded by his human liege.

Central to all Ss'ressen communities is the hatchery, a squat building usually constructed of rare amber built either upon a heat source, as in the case of the Black Talons, or containing a large fire. These hatcheries also double as religious temples for the Black Talons. The Matriarch functions as the High Priestess of their fledgling religion, honoring the Fire Dragon as lifegiver, savior and protector.

Many human theologians believe that the Fire Dragon is actually a merging of aspects of two separate human deities, Saluwé and Nier. Saluwé is the Goddess of nature, women and fertility, ushering in new generations and protecting the community as a whole, whereas Nier is the Lord of Flaming Destruction, destroyer of enemies but also devoted to the concepts of honor and duty. Both of these aspects tap into the needs of both genders of the species and bind them into one. Ss'ressen priestesses, of course, strongly disagree, claiming that the Fire Dragon is a unique and separate being. Only the Gods truly know.

Given that the sacred place of the Dragon is within the incubation chamber, females have taken on the role of priestesses, excluding males from their mystic rituals. Those males desiring to serve the Dragon spiritually are encouraged to join a cabal of druids, an exclusively male organization.

The Dragon does not demand ritual sacrifice, but Its tenets are severe, nonetheless. Life and battle are seen as a crucible whereupon the strong and pure are strengthened and the weak are consumed. When critical differences arise, a Trial by Combat settles the issue.

These ritual combats are seldom to the death. The Dragon's sacred words instruct: *"Truth will strengthen your weapons, not magic. Conviction will be your ally, not those around you or the devious enchantments that may be cast. The flat of the sword shall smite lies, not pierce them with callous edge. Mercy will be the sign of the victor, not bloody murder."*

Of course, accidents do happen.

Ss'ressen Characters

Player character Ss'ressen must come from the Black Talon egg clutch. They possess the following racial attributes:

Black Talon Ss'ressen Racial Traits:

- +2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence: Black Talon Ss'ressen are quick, mobile creatures with amazing agility due to their tails, but their insular tribal society and savage heritage do not lend themselves to academic achievement.
- Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, Ss'ressen have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Ss'ressen base speed is 30 ft.
- Natural Armor: Black Talons gain a +2 natural bonus to armor class due to their thick, scaly hide. The hides of Black Talon Ss'ressen are somewhat softer than those of their kin in other clutches, who view the trait as evidence of the clutch's inherent weakness.
- Low-light Vision: Ss'ressen can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and details under these conditions.
- Natural Weapons: Ss'ressen have sharp claws with which to attack their foes. Ss'ressen can attack with two claws (dealing 1d4 + Str bonus points of damage with each). Ss'ressen using one-handed melee weapons can attack with a claw as an off-hand attack.
- Cold Susceptibility: All Ss'ressen suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to all Dexterity checks, Dexterity-based skill checks, and attack rolls when in cold weather (40° F or below). A successful Will save (DC 12) reduces the penalty to -2.
- +2 racial bonus to Balance, Jump, and Swim checks. A Ss'ressen's tail provides extra strength and support when performing various feats of agility.
- Automatic Languages: Milandisian and Ss'ressen. Bonus Languages: Low Coryani.
- Favored Class: Ranger. A multiclass Ss'ressen's ranger class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing.

Character Classes within the Black Talon Clutch

The Black Talons are the most adaptive of the Ss'ressen egg clutches, and as such may excel in any of the core character classes.

Barbarian

Most Black Talons are considered quite "civilized" due to their exposure to Milandisian society, but some Ss'ressen still feel the burning flames of rage within their breast. They disdain the

New Deity

The Fire Dragon (Demipower)

Symbol: Top half of dragon resting upon a coiled tail

Alignment: Deities in the world of Arcanis lack this attribute. See the *Codex Arcanis* for more details.

Portfolio: Ss'ressen

Domains: Earth, Fire, Holy, Plant, Saurian

Favored Weapon: "Dragon's Tail" (flail)

Saurian Domain

Deities: Fire Dragon

Granted Power: You may cast *animal friendship* once per day. This applies to reptiles only. Knowledge (Ss'ressen) is a class skill.

Saurian Domain Spells

1. *Magic fang*
2. *Produce flame*
3. *Protection from elements* (fire only)
4. *Greater magic fang*
5. *Wall of fire*
6. *Fire seeds*
7. *Fire storm*
8. *Incendiary cloud*
9. *Shapechange* (can change into fire-subtype dragons only)

Holy Domain

Deities: All

Granted Power: Choose one from Chaos, Evil, Good or Law depending on your alignment (e.g. lawful good may choose either Law or Good). This choice applies to the domain spell for each level when there are different versions depending on alignment. You cast all Holy domain spells at +1 caster level. Characters of the neutral alignment cannot choose this domain.

Holy Domain Spells

1. *Protection from chaos/evil/good/law*
2. *Spiritual weapon*
3. *Magic circle against chaos/evil/good/law*
4. *Divine smite**
5. *Dispel chaos/evil/good/law*
6. *Lesser planar ally*
7. *Word of law/chaos/good/evil*
8. *Aura of faith**
9. *Summon monster IX***

* Spells found in the Codex Arcanis.

** Cast as a spell of the chosen descriptor only.

training and discipline of the levied warriors and instead rely upon the fury and ferocity that is their birthright.

Bard

Rare within Black Talon society, bards are increasing in number as more and more Ss'ressen travel beyond the confines of their homeland. Ss'ressen bards prefer percussion and heavy bass wind instruments, but it is their ability to weave tales of the outside world that truly entrances the clutch as a whole.

Cleric

The Fire Dragon's revelation to the Black Talons has bolstered the ranks of clerics within the clutch. By default, the Matriarch serves the community as high priestess. Ss'ressen view the clergy as an exclusively female pursuit, and breeding practices ensure that no males can become clerics. Those males who still feel the heat of the Dragon's heart are encouraged to join the brotherhood of druids, which specifically serves the spiritual needs of Ss'ressen males.

Druid

Given their affinity to nature, Ss'ressen druids are a logical extension of the Fire Dragon's religion. Barred from joining the exclusively female clergy, this brotherhood formed from the need of certain males to follow the divine path of the Dragon. Druids and rangers work closely together as the protectors of the Ss'ressen homeland and its people.

Fighter

As part of the agreement reached with the Milandisian noble for establishing a homeland within the Sulfur Marshes, Ss'ressen are expected to train and fight with their human counterparts in times of war. Many Ss'ressen distinguish themselves in battle, fighting with courage and valor. Some are invited into knightly orders in which, though landless, they are treated as nobles of the realm.

Black Talon Ss'ressen train with weapons crafted from sharp obsidian, normally jagged axes and javelins. Steel weapons are highly regarded, but must be constantly maintained in the wet and humid environment.

Monk

Ss'ressen monks contemplate harnessing the inner fury of the Dragon while seeking physical perfection. These monks believe that that Dragon has gifted them with all the weapons and armor they will ever need; claws rather than blades, scales better than most armor, and a strong, swift tail.

Paladin

The Black Talons have a highly developed sense of duty and honor, concepts sacred to the Fire Dragon. Some Ss'ressen feel the need to devote themselves to these ideals and spread the teachings of the Dragon not through words, but through deeds. Respected and beyond reproach, Ss'ressen paladins are welcomed or feared throughout the known lands of man.

Ranger

Often living their entire lives within the wilderness, Ss'ressen make for excellent rangers. Easily adaptable to a variety of environments, these rangers (along with their druid associates) are the chosen protectors of Ss'ressen swamplands.

Yet wanderlust can take hold of a Ss'ressen heart as easily as it does that of a human. Many Black Talons find themselves traveling the rest of the continent in search of other wonders of nature.

Rogue

Preferring the title of scrounger or scout, these Ss'ressen serve an important role in Black Talon society. In all societies, there are those who stand out or walk slightly out of step with the rest of the community. These Ss'ressen prefer to lead solitary lives and serve as scouts or foragers for the rest. But loneliness can come to even these beings, and they may join others for a time before once again desiring only the company of their own thoughts.

Sorcerers and Wizards

Having had their very essence manipulated by the Ssanu caste of the serpent men of Ssethregore, some Black Talons have the ability to channel arcane forces naturally. Most Ss'ressen tend to draw this energy from deep within and force it to manifest by will alone. Though wizards are not unheard of, sorcerers dominate the majority of the arcane spellcasters within the Ss'ressen society.

Other Egg Clutches

Below are brief examples of three other egg clutches that remain in Ssethregore. These make for excellent adversaries and add a touch of variety to a lizardfolk encounter. Modify the lizardfolk statistics found in *Core Rulebook III* as suggested below.

The Barbed Tail Egg Clutch

Sporting twin rows of thick spines down their backs rather than the usual sagittal crests, these Ss'ressen gained their name from their favorite natural weapon, a heavy spiked tail. Bred to be stronger and more savage than the average Ss'ressen, members of the Barbed Tail egg clutch delight in brutal warfare and in tormenting their victims.

Barbed Tail Lizardfolk
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (22 hp)
Speed: 20 ft.
Attacks: Tail slap +4 melee (or greatclub +4 melee), 2 claws +0 melee, bite +0 melee; or javelin +2 ranged
Damage: Tail slap 1d8+2, greatclub 1d10+2, claw 1d4+1, bite 1d4+1, or javelin 1d6+2
Feats: Tail Attack
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10
Challenge Rating: 1

Flaming Tongue Egg Clutch

Bred to provide a ranged attack to demoralize their foes, the Flaming Tongue Ss'ressen produce a stream of oil that ignites once it comes into contact with oxygen. Knowledgeable opponents may have a moment to prepare themselves, as the large sagittal crest sported by these creatures begins to flush and turn a ruddy color just before the Ss'ressen unleashes its flaming breath.

Flaming Tongue Lizardfolk
AC: 18 (+5 natural, +3 Dex)
Special Qualities: Fire Tongue (Ex): Once every three rounds, Flaming Tongue Ss'ressen can spit a stream of sticky fiery oil as a ranged touch attack to a distance of 20 feet. Such attacks are made at a +4 ranged attack bonus. Those struck by the flames suffer 2d4 points of fire damage, and will suffer 1d4 points of damage from burning in the subsequent two rounds unless the fire is somehow doused. A target can take a full-round action to attempt to extinguish the flames before taking this additional damage. It takes a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to extinguish the flames. Rolling on the ground allows the character a +2 circumstance bonus to the save. Leaping into a lake or magically extinguishing the flames automatically smothers the flames.
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10
Challenge Rating: 2

Venomous Scale Egg Clutch

Truly the most despicable of all the Ss'ressen breeds, the Venomous Scale use their ability to spit forth a paralytic poison to capture prey wanted for questioning by their superiors. They ruthlessly torment and torture those victims who need not be questioned, and take special joy in knowing that, though they inflict horrible wounds upon them, their captives can only stare back in mute horror.

Venomous Scale Lizardfolk
AC: 16 (+5 natural, +1 Dex)
Special Qualities: Paralytic Spit (Ex): Once every three rounds, Venomous Scale Ss'ressen can spit a paralytic poison as a ranged touch attack to a distance of 20 feet. Such attacks are made at a +2 ranged attack bonus. Those hit by the poison must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes.
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10
Challenge Rating: 2

New Feat

Tail Attack [Special]
Nations: Any
Prerequisite: Lizardfolk, Dex 13+
Description: You have learned how to use your tail as an offensive weapon in melee combat. When using the full-attack option, you can use your tail to make an extra melee attack at your highest base attack bonus, but this attack and all others made during the round suffer a -2 penalty. Alternately, the lizardfolk character may choose to make a single melee tail attack at her highest base attack.

A lizardfolk's tail has a reach of 5 feet and deals 1d4 plus 1 1/2 times the lizardfolk's Str bonus points of damage. Tail attacks are considered unarmed attacks. A lizardfolk who fails a trip attempt made with the tail is not susceptible to the usual retributive trip attempt.

Henry Lopez is president of Paradigm Concepts. Find out more about the world of Arcanis at www.paradigmconcepts.com.

Finally feeling that propriety had been served, I took my leave of my new scaly friends. They seemed a rather polite group, very formal, and gave me the proper deference as a noble of the land.

I hope to return someday and properly study these creatures, but my journey to the catacombs cannot wait any longer. I am sure that the expedition is lost without my expert leadership and that it was only by some oversight that my invitation was mislaid.

RAPPAN ATHUK 2

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Black Riders and Bone Horses

Undead Cavalry from *The Gryphon's Legacy*

by Wolfgang Baur • illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

The Gryphon's Legacy is a new **d20 System** adventure set in the world of the *Sun & Scale* campaign setting, a world meant for exploration. The adventure offers gamers something they haven't really seen before: an RPG adventure that reflects the medieval focus on cavalry tactics. Myths and legends reflect this bias; the Headless Horsemen, the Riders of Rohan, the Crusaders, the Nazgul, the knights of Roland and Arthur, and the archetypal image of Death itself, riding a pale horse.

Once I decided to make my villains cavalry raiders, I needed a twist to appeal to the jaded gamer audience. Regular cavalry would be too... regular for a full-blooded d20 adventure. So the villains of *The Gryphon's Legacy* are ghostly riders on undead steeds, with full access to cavalry tactics and the supernatural powers of the undead. What difference does cavalry make in your **d20 System** game? Rather a lot, actually. And do undead have an advantage in the saddle? Only sometimes. Let's take a look.

Tack and Barding

The ghost riders of *The Gryphon's Legacy* are well-prepared to fight from the saddle; for them, horses are everything. Their most important gear is the saddle itself, closely followed by stirrups, weapons, and sometimes barding. In the d20 core rules, military saddles are much preferred over riding saddles (*Core Rulebook I*, page 113). There's no advantage to a riding saddle, so don't expect player characters to use them if they can afford better.

Undead horses can carry bulkier, less comfortable barding than living creatures, and make no complaint. They can carry a new category of barding, as shown here (medium and heavy barding are shown for comparison). Note that while extreme barding slows them down, most undead steeds are faster than living horses to begin with.

Table 1: Barding

Barding	Speed (40 ft.)	(50 ft.)	(60 ft.)	(70 ft.)
Medium	30 ft.	35 ft.	40 ft.	45 ft.
Heavy	30 ft.*	35 ft.*	40 ft.*	45 ft.*
Extreme	25 ft.*	30 ft.*	35 ft.*	40 ft.*

*A mount wearing heavy or extreme barding moves at only triple (instead of quadruple) normal rate when running.

Extreme barding weighs more than any normal armor, and provides an additional +3 armor bonus to armor class.

Removing and fitting extreme barding takes eight times as long as the figures given on Table 7-6: Donning Armor.

Weaponry

Weapons used from horseback fall into three categories: charge weapons, ranged weaponry, and melee weapons. Each has its place in cavalry combat.

Ranged: Mounted archers on horses or in chariots are a long-standing tradition, going back to Persia and Egypt and Babylon, but they require long training to shoot accurately from the saddle. Undead archers, of course, can command an undead steed to stand perfectly still—and undead mounts don't panic as living horses do. Fortunately, most undead legions aren't sophisticated enough to master the complicated feint-and-withdrawal tactics required of effective horse archers. Those that do tend to prefer crossbows, which are easier to manipulate and can easily be reloaded at a distance before the mounted archers return for a second volley.

Charge: For the charge, it's all about shock power and penetration: lances are ideal, though spears work almost as well. Axes and swords can benefit from the added speed and power of a charge—they concentrate power on a narrow blade that rips through the opponent. That need to concentrate power works both ways; anything that depends on blunt impact doesn't really work for a charging rider. Rapiers are too lightweight, daggers too short, natural weapons lack reach, and blunt weapons can sometimes transfer their impact to the hand that holds them rather than to the target.

Melee: Once the charge is over, a knight often has to engage an opponent below him—and through lances provide 10 ft. reach, they cannot be used against immediately adjacent targets. So, riders drop their lances and reach for a horseman's weapon. Weapons that benefit from the long strike downward, such as maces, flails, and axes, are common. Slashing weapons such as scimitars are also good, as they are less likely to become entangled in a foe's armor or flesh.

What most footmen only learn if they survive their first mounted charge is that the horses themselves are a weapon. Trampling, freezing or fiery hooves, and even flesh-eating undead steeds can send normal men-at-arms or even hardened adventurers scurrying for safety.

Undead in Combat

Hard-bitten, leathery riders—from Mongols to the US Cavalry—aren't born. They are tanned and weathered by bitter experience in the saddle, and that means acquiring the right skills. The undead are more leathery than most.

Flesh-and-blood horses have one major problem: Any horseman needs the Ride skill to have a chance of keep-

Table 2: Undead Trample

Creature Type	Base Trample Damage	Additional Fire Damage	Additional Cold Damage
Light Warhorse	1d4	+2	+1
Heavy Warhorse	1d10+1	+3	+3
Elephant	2d8+10	+5	+9

ing control of his or her horse when engaged against mounted opponents or footmen. Control of a mount during combat is quite tricky (see *Core Rulebook I*, page 72), and requires the Ride skill. Control of undead mounts is much easier: all that is required is that the rider have command of the arcane or divine power that created the undead in the first place, or their blessing. Beyond that, the rider sometimes needs to be able to give verbal commands to a mount, though most depend on reins and spurs (for horses) or ankus (for elephants).

Feats for the Living and the Undead

To make the most of the cavalry advantage, pick up the related feats: Mounted Combat is the obvious choice, and it is crucial if you ride a light, unarmored horse. Ride-By Attack, Trample, Mounted Archery, and Spirited Charge are all worthwhile for certain character types. Be sure that many skeletal knights have these feats well-honed.

Riders aren't the only ones who gain feats, though. Undead horses have supernatural abilities beyond their mere existence. The following two feats are common to the Ghost Horses presented in *The Gryphon's Legacy*, and could easily be applied to other undead creatures or even nightmares, overgrown hell hounds, or demonic steeds.

New Feats

Airy Gallop [Special]

You can run wherever your rider wishes—whether there's ground beneath you or not!

Prerequisite: Con —.

Benefit: Mounts with the Airy Gallop feat have the ability to gallop over chasms, run "downhill" from a sheer cliff to the ground below, or even be convinced to gallop "uphill" into the air itself.

To achieve these unbelievable tasks, the mount's rider must make a successful Ride check (DC 15) at the beginning of the action, and every 10 minutes thereafter with a cumulative -2 circumstance penalty to each successive check. Mounts cannot stand still while performing an Airy Gallop; if forced to move slower than a run or stop, they immediately fall.

Spook Animals [Special]

Living animals are greatly disturbed by your chilling presence.

Prerequisite: Con —.

Benefit: When an animal or its rider is the subject of a charge or attack by a mount with this feat, it must make a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 mount's HD + mount's Charisma modifier). If the saving throw fails, the animal suffers a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws as long as the mount is within 30 ft.

Tactics

Cavalry tactics boil down to a two simple things: run them down, then run them over. If that fails, gallop into the sunset. Undead cavalry rely on the old standbys, with a few new twists.

Charge: A charging rider with a lance inflicts 2d8 damage, 6d8 with a critical hit, and often can gain an attack of opportunity even after charging because of his superior reach (10 feet). With a successful charge, he also can overrun a smaller creature. See the *Core Rulebook I*, page 138 and 139, for full details.

Trample: Trampling enemies underfoot requires trained war horses or innately evil undead steeds, but it can be surprisingly effective. Undead such as ghost horses have cold hooves that blacken grass and freeze the blood. See *Core Rulebook III*, page 9, for details of the Trample special attack. Undead mounts often are able to add supernatural fire or cold to their trample damage, as shown in Table 2, above.

Note that undead creatures, because of their lighter mass and strength (many are little more than bones and withered flesh), cause less base trample damage than living elephants (2d8+15) or horses (1d6+4). The same lighter mass gives them greater speed.

In addition to the base damage, the

charring fire of their hooves can set combustible materials alight, or the freezing blast of their cold hooves can freeze ground and wither plants. Undead steeds with fiery or chilling hooves grant a +8 and +5 circumstance bonus to Tracking attempts against them, respectively.

If you decide to add this quality to an undead mount, especially if paired with one or both of the new feats above, consider upping the creature's challenge rating by 1.

Maneuverability: Riders can charge, retreat, and wheel across a battlefield faster than foot soldiers—and this means they can attack a formation more effectively than infantry can. For undead, this advantage is multiplied by the precision of their maneuvers. Undead cavalry ranks maintain very tight formation even during chaotic wheeling, flanking, and charges. This cohesion makes it easier for them to break a line of pikemen, and tougher to gain any advantage based on throwing the undead into confusion.

Overland Speed: While horses don't walk that much faster than humans, they can walk faster while carrying a load—and that allows cavalry of all kinds to press on over any terrain more quickly than the poor foot soldiers who have to hump their packs the hard way. Undead have an enormous advantage here: Perpetual motion.

Unlike living horses, undead steeds can travel all day and night. Their ability to attack or retreat so quickly

Table 3: Constant Undead Movement

Mount (carrying load)	Per Hour	Per Day
Ghost Horse	7 miles	168 miles
Ghost Horse (150-500 lb.)	6 miles	144 miles
Undead Light Warhorse	6 miles	144 miles
Undead Light Warhorse (150-500 lb.)	5 miles	120 miles
Undead Heavy Warhorse	4 miles	96 miles
Undead Heavy Warhorse (200-800 lb.)	3 miles	72 miles
Undead War Elephant	3 miles	84 miles
Undead War Elephant(500-1,500 lb.)	2 miles	60 miles

Undead War Elephant

Huge Undead

Hit Dice: 11d12 (71 hp)
Initiative: +0 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft., 30 ft. with extreme half-plate barding
Armor Class: 17 (-2 size, +9 natural) or 27 (-2 size, +9 natural, +10 extreme half-plate barding)
Attacks: 1 slam +12 melee, 2 stamps +7 melee, or gore +12 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+7, stamp 2d6+3; gore 2d8+10
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft/10 ft.
Special Attacks: Fiery feet, trample 2d8+10 (+5 fire)
Special Qualities: Undead, provide cover
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +8
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 10, Con —, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 9
Skills: Listen +13, Spot +13, Intimidate +11
Feats: Cleave, Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Any land
Organization: Solitary or herd (6-24)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: 12-33 HD (Gargantuan)

Undead war elephants are enormous undead raised from the bones of a mammoth, mastodon, or elephant killed in battle or during a sacrifice to the gods of death. The thick hide of these elephants is covered with necromantic sigils and tattoos; their ivory tusks are blackened, as if by extreme age. Their eye sockets glow as if lit from within by fiery lanterns, and their flopping ears are often little more than shredded leather.

Their spirits are angry at being trapped in a dead body, and they sometimes seek to wander off to the Elephant's Graveyard if not carefully controlled by their makers. More often, though, they are titanic centerpoints of undead armies, or command posts and observation platforms for generals commanding undead cavalry. While they are not quite as fast as undead warhorses or ghost horses, they are virtually impregnable when fitted with full armor.

The bone ribcage of an undead war elephant is sometimes used by lesser undead as a strange chariot, and a howdah made of wood and covered in green leather is often set on top of the undead war elephant. Truly wealthy undead generals often commission barding for their undead war elephants; this amounts to a wall of iron plating that makes the elephant a battering ram.

Combat

War elephants are relatively clever for undead mounts; they can think and act on their own when necessary, though their typical reaction to any attack is a blindingly furious assault. In herds, however, undead war elephants have been known to encircle, stampede, or even ambush their foes.

Fiery Feet (Su): In life, elephants fear fire—this fact is used to drive them off the battlefield. In undeath, this fear disappears, replaced with the ability to set everything they trample on fire. Undead war elephants confer an additional 5 points of damage to trample victims. Their fiery feet set combustible materials alight.

Trample (Ex): An undead war elephant can trample Medium-size or smaller creatures for automatic damage. Opponents who do not make attacks of opportunity against the undead war elephant can attempt a Reflex save (DC 22) to halve the damage.

Provide Cover (Ex): An undead war elephant is large enough to provide cover to creatures sheltering in its ribcage or howdah. Treat this cover as 75% for the howdah; for the ribcage, the undead war elephant provides 90% cover when fitted with half-plate barding, and just 50% cover when only its bones and leathery skin protect the occupants.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

means that the undead never fight except where and when they want to, and they can outrun almost any pursuit.

Table 3 shows movement rates for undead cavalry moving 24 hours a day, but also can be used for undead infantry. Note that carrying a load still slows the undead down, though they do not tire.

Note that the numbers above are given for 24 hours of movement a day; time spent to replenish weapons or supplies, raise more undead to fill out the ranks, or even to reshoe mounts or allow living allies to rest is not accounted for.

Defeating Undead Riders

The fact that undead are completely mindless and obedient steeds can be their secret weakness. Without their riders, most undead steeds are not aggressive. Indeed, their undead status is the major disadvantage of undead mounts: they can be rebuked or turned. A pious priest or paladin can turn aside an entire mounted charge with a single prayer.

Rebuking and turning mounts is hardly automatic, though, especially if the mount has a rider. Just as the rider of a living mount grants his saving throw to his mount, so the rider of an undead steed can help keep his, her, or its mount out of trouble. If the rider is undead as well as the steed, the attempt to turn or rebuke must affect the rider before the steed can be affected.

Finally, remember that the traditional weapons of pikes, spears set against a charge, trenches filled with stakes, and even holy water all work against undead horses, but courage and a cool head are crucial. Undead riders count on fear, striking in the hours after midnight, setting fire to homes or campsites. They rely on the confusion and panic of peasants or henchmen to help them attack and retreat uninjured—then they ride all night and day and do it again a hundred miles away. A true hero is the one who stands alone against the black riders of the night, unafraid—or saddles up against them on a horse with a heart as fearless as his own. D

Wolfgang Baur is the author of The Gryphon's Legacy, *which includes statistics for ghost horses, plus more information on undead cavalry tactics and a plot that features cavalry raids, mounted skirmishes, and a stronghold of evil.*

OGC TRACKER

The undead war elephant, extreme barding, and new feats presented in this article are designated as Open Content. All other material is considered Product Identity.

Firearms in Freeport

By Chris Pramas

Firearm Design by Sam Wood • Cartography by Rob Lee

Illustration by Jonathan Hunt

A new type of weapon has only recently appeared on the streets of Freeport: the firearm. These weapons are expensive, unreliable, and slow to reload. However, they are easier to master than a longbow and provide flash and bang to those without an aptitude for magic. This article showcases the firearms of Freeport, with their history, new rules for any campaign, and a new city-based location.

The key to the creation of firearms was the discovery of blackpowder. Dwarves on the continent made this leap several hundred years ago, but they never used it outside of tunneling and demolition. They could see the big bang, but subtler applications eluded them. It was the gnomish mechanical genius Kolter who first envisioned a hand-held weapon powered by blackpowder. He brought his first prototypes to the dwarves, only to be rebuffed. Soon after a powerful organization of wizards caught wind of Kolter's invention and they hounded him off the continent entirely.

Kolter, like many renegades before him, settled in Freeport. He opened a small shop and made a decent living selling clocks and toys. Late at night, in the privacy of his workroom, he continued his innovative work.

Five years ago, he completed his second prototype, the Kolter Clockwork FP. This was a large pistol with an elaborate clockwork triggering mechanism. The pistol worked after a fashion, but it was unwieldy and he had difficulty finding appropriate ammunition. He tried small darts at first, but the powder inevitably destroyed them. Later he experimented with steel and silver balls, and even diamond chips. Silver was the most successful of the lot, but its cost was prohibitive. Finally, he settled on lead projectiles. The softness of the metal made them easier to load, but they still packed quite a punch.

What is Freeport?

Freeport is a raucous fantasy city, first seen in the Origins Award-winning adventure *Death in Freeport*. Freeport has since played host to three more adventures, and this December, the definitive citybook (*Freeport: The City of Adventure*) hits the shelves. From the beginning, Freeport has been designed for use in any fantasy **d20 System** campaign. Since it's an island city, it's easy to drop into your home campaign or any published setting. A series of monthly articles, *Focus on Freeport*, has been appearing on Green Ronin Publishing's website for exactly one year. Go to www.greenronin.com to learn more about Freeport.

Table 2: Kolter Firearms

	Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Increment	Weight	Type
small	Clockwork FP	900 gp	1d10	x3	15 ft.	3 1/2 lb.	P
	Dragon FP	500 gp	2d8	x3	20 ft.	4 lb.	P
	Privateer FP	400 gp	2d6	x3	30 ft.	3 lb.	P
medium	Stinger FP	100 gp	2d4	x3	10 ft.	1 lb.	P
	Gorgon GG	500gp	3d6	x3	50 ft.	10 lb.	P
	Harpy GG*	650 gp	2d6**	x2	30 ft.	7 lb.	P
	Medusa GG*	750 gp	1d12	x2	Special	8 lb.	P
large	Titan GG*	1,500gp	2d8	x2	Special	25 lb.	P

* Special rules apply. See weapon description. ** "Splash" damage 1d6.

Three years ago, Kolter produced his first salable weapon, the Kolter Privateer FP. This pistol featured a smaller triggering mechanism and lead ammunition. Kolter debuted the pistol at Swagfest that year, and impressed the crowds with its noisy discharge and destructive abilities. A number of pirate captains bought the pistols, and Kolter's star immediately began to ascend.

A new set of problems now beset the gnome inventor. Each pistol was hand crafted and the demand soon outstripped his production capacity. At this point Dirwin Arnig, the gnome representative on the Captain's Council, stepped in. Dirwin saw the potential profit of this new weapon. He convinced Kolter that it would be in the best interest of Freeport's gnome community to keep production of firearms "in the family." Dirwin bankrolled an arms factory, while Kolter taught gnome craftspeople how to make the weapons. A monopoly was born.

Now the Kolter Clockworks Factory is in full swing. Kolter followed up his popular pistol designs with a musket, a musketoon, and weapon that has proved very popular with pirates: the swivel gun. Kolter has experiment with larger and larger weapons, but he has shied away from trying something like a cannon. His reasoning is simple. Blackpowder explodes with the application of naught but a spark. Cannons would require barrels of powder and thus be terribly vulnerable to spells such as *fireball* and *produce flame*.

Rules for Kolter Firearms

Using Kolter firearms requires the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms). This feat allows the use of all firearms; those lacking it take the usual -4 penalty to attack rolls.

Reloading a Kolter firearm is a slow process. Powder must be poured down the barrel and the lead shot rammed home. It takes three full-round actions to reload a firearm, and the reload action provokes attacks of opportunity.

Characters with multiple attacks per round can use them only if they have several firearms ready to fire. In other words, a 7th-level fighter can take his two attacks only if he has two loaded pistols at the ready. This limitation also applies to characters with the Firearms Drill feat.

Firearms can be magically enchanted like other ranged weapons. Bullets also can be enchanted, but shot ammunition (due to its nature) cannot. Firearms follow the standard rules for magical item creation and cost. However, they cannot be enchanted with the special abilities Speed or Brilliant Energy.

Firearms are still in their infancy, and are not always reliable. Whenever a 1 is rolled on a firearms attack roll, roll another d20 and consult the Firearms Misfire table.

Table 1: Firearms Misfire

D20	Result
1-3	Kaboom! Weapon explodes, inflicting normal damage to user.
4-8	Fouled. The barrel becomes fouled. An hour must be spent cleaning it out before the weapon can be used again.
9-12	Jammed. The clockwork firing mechanism jams. Clearing the jam requires 1d6 full-round actions. It may fire the round after clearing.
13-16	Weak Charge. Too little powder was used to prime the weapon, so the shot is fired to no effect. Reload as normal.
17-20	Failed Ignition. Either the firing mechanism fails to produce a spark or the powder simply fails to ignite. The weapon doesn't go off, but it can be fired again next round without having to reload.

Weapon Descriptions

Clockwork FP Pistol: This is Kolter's original firearms design. It is not a well-balanced weapon, and the firing mechanism is so large that it tends to catch on cloaks and the like. Only 26 were ever made, and the cost on Table 2 reflects its collector price. It was originally sold at 250 gp.

Ammunition: bullets (10), 3 gp, 2 lb.

Dragon FP Pistol: The Dragon is the biggest pistol in the Kolter arsenal. Named because its huge, smoky discharge is reminiscent of dragon's breath, the weapon is favored by monster slayers due to its great stopping power. Its large size makes it less accurate than the Privateer FP at long range.

Ammunition: bullets (10), 4 gp, 2 1/2 lb.

Gorgon GG Musket: First of the GG range (named in honor of the God of Gnomes), the Gorgon GG is the standard Kolter longarm. It was developed shortly after the Privateer FP and quickly proved itself on the firing range. Wealthy sea captains in Freeport have purchased these weapons for their elite sharpshooters.

Ammunition: bullets (10), 3 gp, 2 lb.

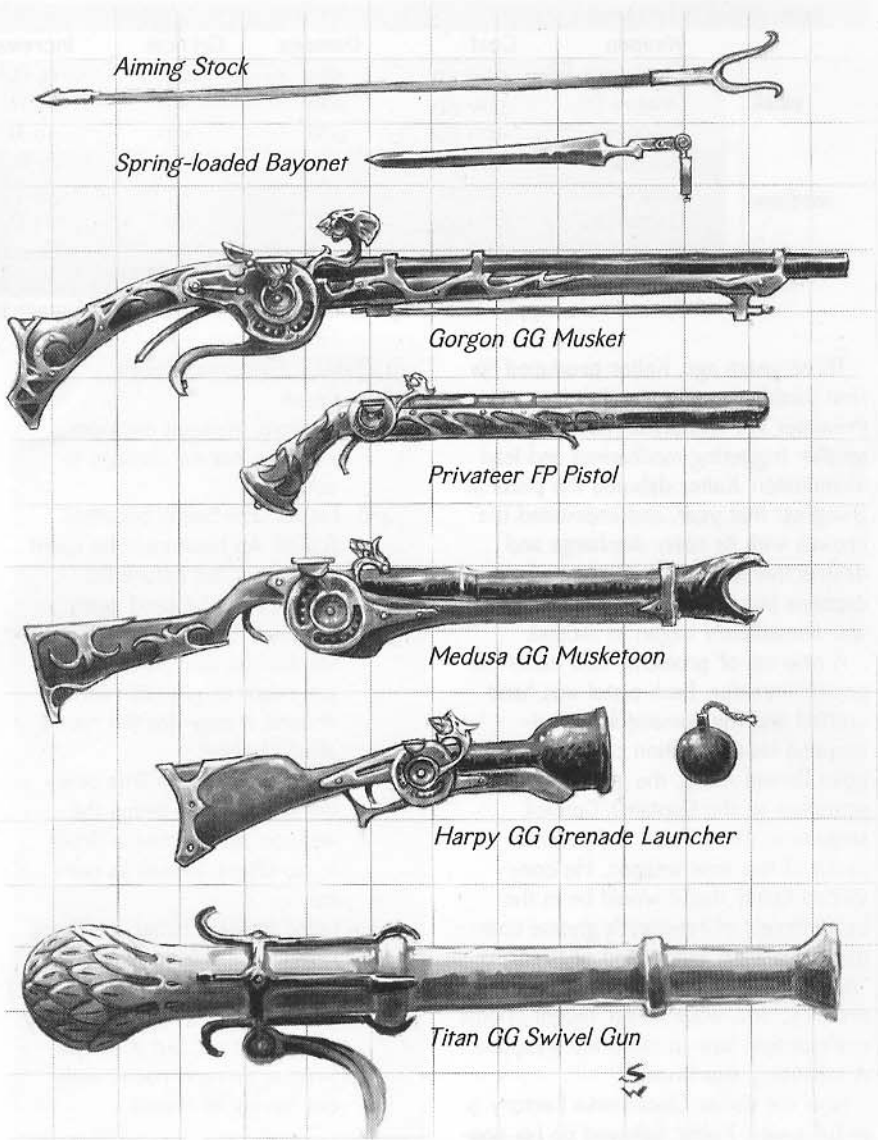
Harpy GG Grenade Launcher: This short-barreled weapon uses a simple charge to lob a crude grenade farther than a man could throw. It isn't particularly accurate, but it works well on ships packed with marines or simply as a distraction. The weapon uses the rules for grenadelike weapons found in the *Player's Handbook* (page 138). "Splash" damage is 1d6.

Ammunition: grenade (1), 25 gp, 1 lb.

Medusa GG Musketoon: The Medusa GG h68as a shorter barrel than the Gorgon

New Feat

Firearms Drill [General]
You have spent long hours drilling with firearms, making loading second nature.
Prerequisite: Dex 13+
Benefit: Each time you take this feat you can reduce your reload time by one full-round action.
Normal: It usually takes three full-round actions to reload a firearm.



due to its close-support role. Unlike other Kolter firearms, the Medusa GG is loaded with a bag of small lead pellets. This sprays out a hail of lead in front of the firer, but does not allow for accurate shooting. A musketoon attack is resolved as a breath weapon line attack with a range of 30 ft. Opponents caught in the line can make a Refex save (DC 15) for half damage.

Ammunition: shot (10), 6 gp, 3 lb.

Privateer FP Pistol: The Privateer FP is the classic Kolter firearm, the weapon that made him famous in Freeport. It has undergone continual improvements over the last several years, which makes it the most reliable of Kolter's weapons (+1 to rolls on Table 1: Firearms Misfire). The Privateer FP is quite popular with pirate captains. If rumors are to be believed, some captains carry four Privateers on boarding actions so they always are always ready to fire.

Ammunition: bullets (10), 3 gp, 2 lb.

Stinger FP Pistol: A wealthy businessman approached Kolter two years ago and asked if he could design a discrete weapon for gentlemen. It would have to be small enough to conceal, but fearsome enough to deal with footpads and thugs. The Stinger FP is the result, a light-weight weapon that can still take down an opponent at short range. Kolter has sold many of these weapons to area merchants, high-class call girls, and fearful politicians.

Ammunition: bullets (10), 2 gp, 1 lb.

Titan GG Swivel Gun: Excited by the success of the Medusa, Kolter went on to design his largest weapon to date: the Titan GG Swivel Gun. The gun is too big for a Medium-size humanoid to fire normally, so Titans usually are mounted on ships or walls. Like the Medusa, they fire a spray of lead pellets (or, in a pinch, nails or rocks). Ideal for boarding actions, a Titan GG can sweep a deck clear in a matter of seconds. The weapon fires a 30 ft. cone of spinning metal. Anyone caught in the area of effect takes damage, with a Reflex save (DC 18) for half. A swivel gun is normally crewed by two men. If they work together, they can reload the weapon in only two rounds.

Ammunition: shot (10), 15 gp, 12 lb.

Accessories

Aiming Stock: An aiming stock looks like a pitchfork or military fork, but it is not a weapon itself. Rather, it's an aid to help steady the Kolter longarms and give them increased accuracy. As a partial action, the aiming stock can be jammed into the ground and a musket laid into the V section. As long as the firer doesn't move, all shots gain a +1 circumstance bonus to hit. At the moment, the only weapon that benefits from the aiming stock is the Gorgon GG musket.

Price: 4 gp

Spring-loaded Bayonet: It didn't take long for Kolter to figure out that an empty firearm was a liability in melee combat. He invented the spring-loaded bayonet to turn his longarms into spears in an instant. The blade folds under the stock of a Gorgon or a Medusa and can be readied as a free action. The weapons cannot shoot while the bayonet is deployed, but the firearm acts as a shortspear in the interim.

Price: 5 gp

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Kolter Clockworks Factory

Kolter's factory is located in Freeport's Warehouse District. Dirwin Arnig bought a dilapidated warehouse, had it demolished, and then bankrolled the construction of brand new facility. The Kolter Clockworks Factory is a testament to gnomish ingenuity and greed. It is over two hundred feet long and made of stout brick. The place gives the impression, not coincidentally, of a well-protected fortress, down to crenellations on the rooftop.

Factory Features

Unless otherwise noted, the following features are true.

Iron Doors: All outer doors and two sliding inner doors (between rooms 4 and 5 and 5 and 8) are made of reinforced iron: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 75; break DC 30. The doors each have a closeable peephole at (human) chest level, which allows for both the inspection of guests and the firing of pistols (should the guests be unwelcome). The doors usually are locked (DC 30) and trapped with a *glyph of warding* (requires passphrase "big money"; blast glyph, 5d8 sonic damage which also alerts the guards; Ref save for half damage, DC 15; Disable Device DC 28).

Wooden Doors: The remaining inner doors are made of strong wood: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 25; break DC 25.

Light: This being a firearms factory, open flames are strictly forbidden. Each room is illuminated by 2-6 *sunrods*, depending on its size.

Rooftop (not on map)

The roof of the factory is flat, with a gnome-sized battlement running along its edges. Two guards are on duty here during the day, and four at night. An iron trapdoor leads down to Room 7. Guards behind the battlement gain one-half cover.

Room 1: Front Office

Double iron doors open onto the street. Visitors to the factory come here first, and most don't get beyond this room. This is the domain of Seebach (male gnome Brd2), a former poet who now acts as the public face for the Kolter Clockwork Factory. Seebach is a verbose fellow who knows how to make his visitors feel at ease. He can wax eloquently about the clockwork toys that line the shelves or discuss the latest rumors with all the aplomb of a nosy housewife. Seebach conducts his business from his desk. Here he keeps appointments, issues invitations, generates invoices, and the like.

During the day a guard (see sidebar) stands ready behind the southern door. Should there be any trouble in the front office, the guard is ready to rush in. After hours, two guards remain on duty in the office.

Room 2: Kolter's Office

Kolter spends so much time in his office he might as well sleep here (and sometimes he does). Although he has seen some substantial financial rewards, you wouldn't guess it to look at his office. Kolter has a desk, a work table, and two bookcases. A bewildering array of plans, schematics, and clockwork parts are spread about the room. A pile of dirty dishes inevitably sits on his desk, as he takes most meals here so he can keep working. He only leaves his office to inspect other areas of the factory, which he does frequently but on no set schedule. Kolter finds that keeps his workers on their toes.

Several months after the factory opened, Kolter found that the western door (which leads to the front office) only encouraged people to come into his office and annoy him. He has since had it nailed shut.

For Kolter's stats, see the sidebar on page 73.

Room 3: Design Studio

Kolter now maintains a three-gnome design staff. Generally, Kolter has the big breakthroughs and he turns his ideas over to his staff for implementation. They also work on special commissions. These staffers are Linkin (male gnome Exp4), Mab (female gnome Exp2/Ill3), and Noblick (male gnome Exp3). Each maintains a desk in the Design Studio, although they often are found in the shop areas overseeing the execution of their designs.

The fourth desk in this room belongs to Karl (male gnome Exp2/Rog1), the factory's beleaguered accountant and bookkeeper. Karl was recommended by Dirwin Arnig, and he reports to the councilor periodically on the financial health of factory. Arnig is still waiting to recoup on his investment, and Karl is in the perfect position to make sure everything stays above board.

Room 4: Metal Shop

This large room is, in many ways, the heart of the factory. All the clockwork, triggering mechanisms, gun barrels, and bullets are made here. A large kiln dominates the southern side of the room (because of this, no powder is allowed in the Metal Shop). The rest of the room has a variety of workbenches, lathes, drills, and other tools. The southern door is an emergency exit that is not usually used. Nonetheless, a guard is on duty by it after hours.

Eight metalworkers and gunsmiths labor in the Metal Shop. They work under the eye of Hellig (female gnome Exp4), the shop foreman. It is her job to ensure the continued quality of Kolter firearms.

> The Kolter Factory is a testament to gnomish ingenuity and greed.

Room 5: Wood Shop

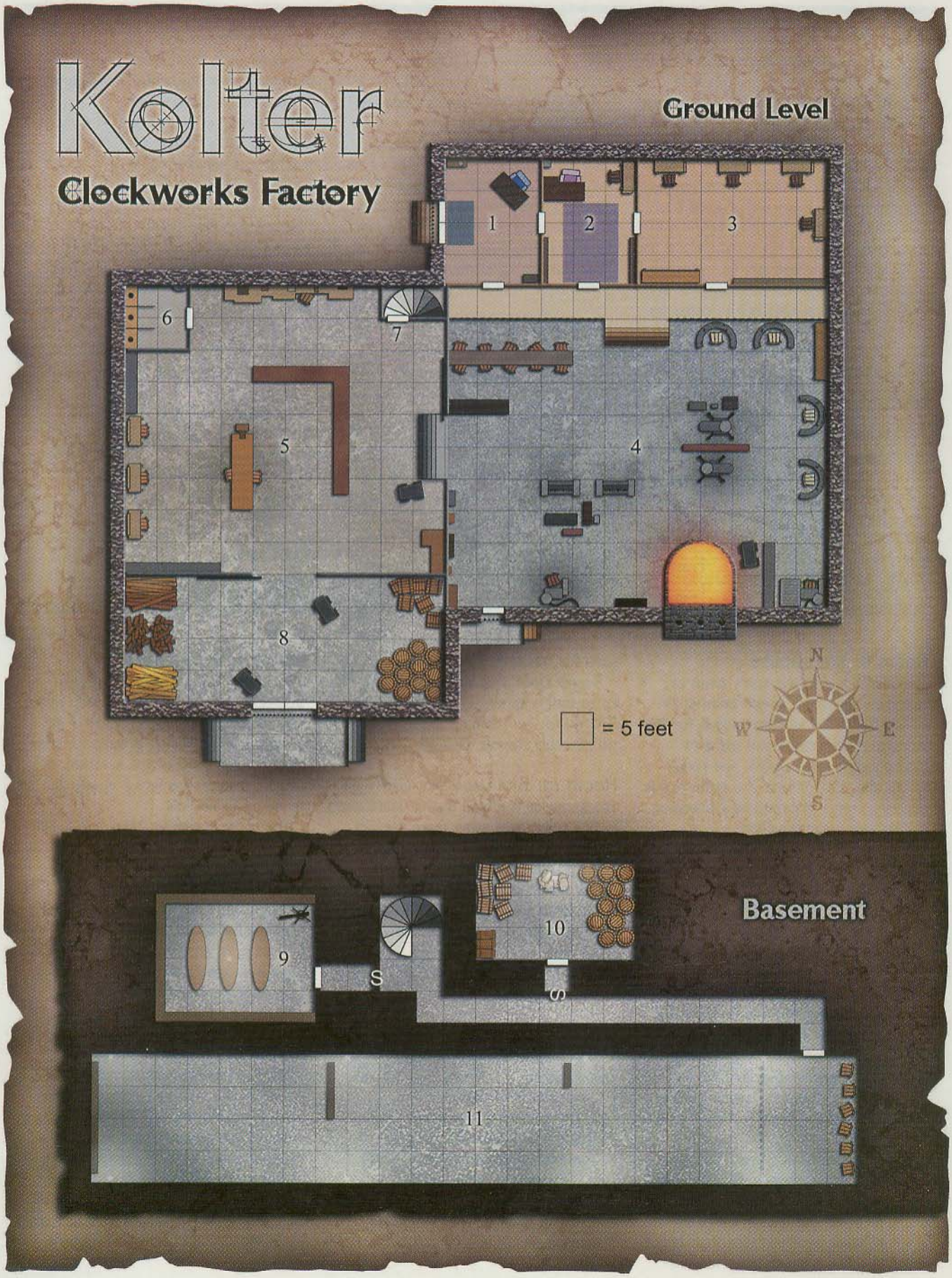
Six more craftsmen work here on the wooden components of Kolter's firearms. They also are responsible for the final assembly of the weapons, as the metal parts come fresh from Room 4. Like the Metal Shop, the Wood Shop is full of workbenches and tools. The guards also keep racks of ready weapons here, for quick access during an emergency.

Room 6: Privy

Not even gnomes can resist nature's call.

Room 7: Spiral Staircase

This room appears to be a spiral staircase leading to the roof. In fact, the stairway also goes down to a secret basement level, but this part of the staircase appears to be a wall courtesy of an *illusory wall* spell.


Kolter
Clockworks Factory
Ground Level
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7
8
= 5 feet
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Basement
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10
11
S

Kolter

Kolter is a well-mannered and likeable fellow. He comes as a surprise to most people, who seem to expect him to be eccentric, crazy, or both. Others think he must be quite bloodthirsty to create such terrible weapons. In point of fact, Kolter is simply a mechanical genius with a modicum of good business sense. If he has a failing, it is that he can't let go of his work. He's at the factory all the time and he oversees every aspect of his business. His subordinates encourage him to come up with new innovations, in part for the good of the factory and in part to keep Kolter in his office so they can do their work without interruption!

Kolter, male gnome Exp9: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (3 ft.); HD 9d6+18; hp 56; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19; Atk +6/+1 melee (1d6-1/19-20/x2 crit, *+1 short sword*), +13 ranged (2d8+3/x3 crit, *+3 Privateer FP Pistol*); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 7, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 10.
Skills and Feats: Alchemy +14, Appraise +12, Craft (weaponsmithing) +15, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +9, Open Lock +8, Perform +8, Profession (inventor) +14, Search +6, Spot +6, Use Magical Device +12; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Firearms Drill, Point Blank Shot.
Possessions: *+3 leather armor, +3 Privateer FP Pistol, +1 Stinger FP Pistol.*

Erlich, male gnome Ftr5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (3 ft.); HD 5d10+10; hp 40; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 20; Atk +10 melee (1d8+5/19-20/x2 crit, masterwork longsword), +10 ranged (2d8+1/x3 crit, *+1 Privateer FP Pistol* or 3d6+1/x3 crit, *+1 Gorgon GG Musket*); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13.
Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +2, Swim +4; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Firearms Drill, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).
Possessions: *+1 breastplate, +1 Gorgon GG Musket, +1 Privateer FP Pistol,* masterwork longsword.

Guards (14), Male Gnome Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (3 ft.); HD 2d10+4; hp 15; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 18; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/19-20/x2 crit, longsword), +6 ranged (2d8/x3 crit, masterwork Privateer FP Pistol or 3d6/x3 crit, masterwork Gorgon GG Musket); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 9.
Skills and Feats: Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +2; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Firearms Drill, Point Blank Shot.
Possessions: Chainmail, masterwork Gorgon GG Musket, masterwork Privateer FP Pistol, longsword. The guards have access to every type of Kolter firearm during an emergency.

Room 8: Warehouse

The Warehouse is the entry point of raw materials and the exit point of finished goods. The western side is for the storage of the component parts of blackpowder, metal sheets and rods, wood, and fuel for kiln. The eastern side contains crates of brand new firearms and barrels of ammunition.

The twin iron doors to the south lead to an outside loading dock. Two guards are on duty inside at all times.

Room 9: Strongroom

Only two people know this room exists: Kolter himself and Karl. Only Kolter knows how to open the secret door without springing the trap (see below). The Strongroom holds Kolter's most prized possessions, his original plans and weapon prototypes, and the factory's gold (the amount varies week to week, but generally falls between 4,000-10,000 gp).

In addition to prototypes of Kolter classics like the Privateer FP, this room also contains experimental weapons like a fire thrower and a multi-barreled musket. These devices failed their initial trials, but may provide important lessons for future Kolter development.

Secret Door Trap—Globe of Cold: CR 6; 20 radius sphere (7d6); Reflex save (DC 17) for half damage; Search (DC 30); Disable Device (DC 27).

Room 10: Blackpowder Storage

Blackpowder is mixed on site and stored in this room, well away from the kiln. While it is an arduous task to move barrels up and down the spiral stairs, Kolter insists on the security it provides. It would take only one spark to destroy the entire factory, and he simply won't have that.

The secret door is locked (DC 30) but not trapped.

Room 11: Firing Range

The Firing Range is one of the few places outside his office in which Kolter spends time. This long chamber was designed as a proving ground for new weapons, and it contains a variety of targets that can be set up at any distance up to 110 feet.

The room is well ventilated, but even so firing can only go for 20 minutes at a time. After that there is simply too much smoke for accurate shooting (though some tests have gone on to simulate battlefield conditions).

Tests here are run by Erlich (see sidebar), the captain of the factory guard. He rotates his men through here to ensure they maintain their aim and gain familiarity with new weapons.

OGC TRACKER

The Firearms Drill feat and firearms mechanics included in this article are designated as Open Content. All other material, including illustrations, is designated as Product Identity.

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Chris Pramas has written numerous game products for numerous companies. Highlights include Dragonfist *from Wizards of the Coast and* Death in Freeport, *the first-ever published* ***d20 System*** *adventure. He most recently contributed creatures to* Jade Dragons & Hungry Ghosts *and is hard at work on* Freeport: The City of Adventure.

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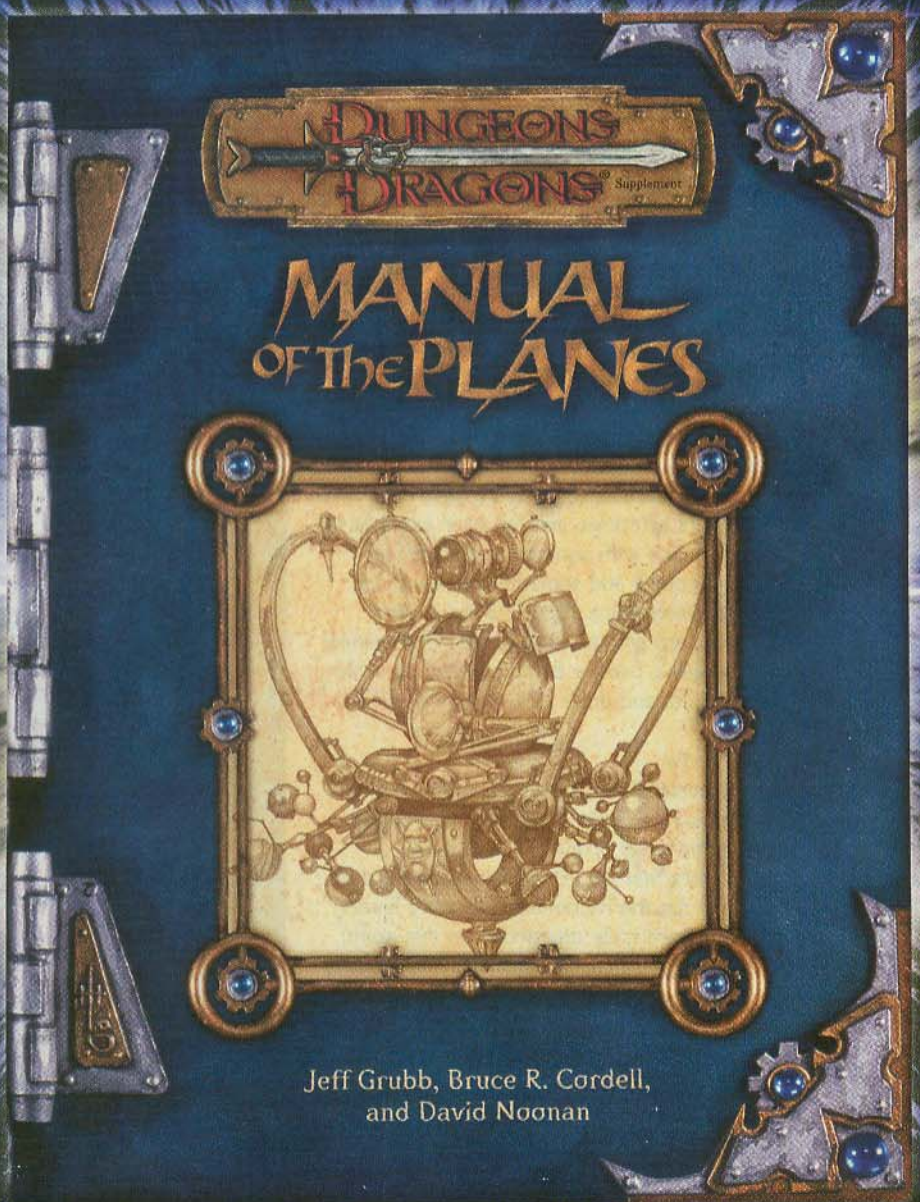

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Mini Adventures

Head-to-Head:

By Jim Bishop

The exciting thing about the OGL and **d20 System** licenses is that a third-party publisher now can take D&D in unexpected directions to meet an unfilled demand. Two lines of mini-adventures, the *Adventure Booster* from Alderac Entertainment Group and the *Instant Adventure* from Fantasy Flight Games, have taken the initiative to provide short, cheap adventures for DMs who might want a one-shot, or who need to run a game on short notice.

At first glance the two lines are very similar in style and presentation. All the mini-adventures are 16 pages long (actually eight 8.5 in. x 11 in. pages folded double), include a map and (often) interior B&W illustrations, and most include a new monster, a new magic item, or both.

The FFG *Instant Adventures* are more expensive than AEG's offerings, and for your extra $1.50 you get maps with squares and scale (and often in color), and sometimes a few more interior illustrations. The AEG *Adventure Booster* maps are serviceable, but aren't marked with squares, usually don't include any scale information, and don't look as nice as FFG's.

Overview

All the mini-adventures share some common problems. First, only a precious few handle Encounter Level properly: most have encounters that are either much too hard or too easy for the recommended party levels, and some are truly disastrous on this point, with EL's more than double the average party level, or so low that the party won't gain XP from the encounter. This isn't just a technical problem: it's a recipe for an unhappy party.

Second, the stat blocks given for almost all encounters have errors, from missing skills and feats to incorrect saves and attack bonuses, to mistaken CRs. This isn't a problem when the monster is taken directly from the *Monster Manual*, but many have class levels or are unique, and it can be frustrating to deal with them in the middle of a game. This is especially true of the new monsters, which serve to illustrate just how difficult monster design is under the new rules.

Third, the handling of skill checks is uniformly poor. The classic example of an opposed test is Move Silently versus Listen,

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The Heart of Amun Khonshu
by Marcelo & Kat Figueroa
Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®
The Heart of Amun Khonshu is a d20 System adventure booster designed for 5-8 characters levels 8-12. It can be played as a stand-alone adventure or dropped into any ongoing campaign setting.
AEG
Alderac Entertainment Group

Must own: Neat traps, solid writing.

but in virtually every situation where this crops up, either the PCs or NPCs are given a static DC for their check, or worse the encounter simply happens regardless of what the PCs do to avoid it.

Finally, the editing of many of these is downright poor. Too many of the mini-adventures mix tenses or use the future tense through-

LEGENDS & LAIRS
INSTANT ADVENTURE
d20 system
The Dragon's Wish
by Justin Bacon
Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®
Series 1
Number 8

Totally unusable: Generic, illogical, and boring.

out ("If the party does X, the monster will do Y.") and both lines are rife with typos.

With all that said, these adventures are dirt cheap ($2.49 for AEG's *Adventure Boosters*, and $3.95 for FFG's *Instant Adventures*), and they're so cute I couldn't stay mad.

It's important to take them as essentially disposable: just a hook, a map, and some encounters. The best of them are more than suited to the task of providing a night's entertainment, and even the worst have a saving grace or two. Almost all have enough background to kick off a new campaign direction. Finally, each has at least a nugget of a great idea, and a good DM can turn even the sketchiest of them into a night of d20 fantasy gaming.

Reviews by Line and Product

Before we get to the nitty-gritty, a word on my biases as a reviewer. To my mind, a mini-adventure should be usable with almost no preparation—meaning that a DM who reads it cover-to-cover should be able to execute it as written without making substantial changes. Adventures that have major rules gaffes, or which don't cover obvious eventualities (such as spell use by party members) were penalized. Adventures that don't provide encounters at the stated party level were penalized. Adventures that depend on DM fiat, or the exercise of raw "because-I-said-so" DM authority, were penalized. In general, I weighted solid-but-dull adventures more highly than adventures with cool hooks and tons of holes, because they better fulfill the promise of the form.

And now to the dirty details, organized alphabetically by line:

AEG Adventure Boosters

Against the Barrow King

Steve Hough

For 4-6 characters, level 3-5

Hook: Villagers beg the party to free them from the tyranny of the barrow king.

The Good: Solid, appropriate encounters, with a nice mix of undead, human cultists, orcs, constructs, and classed humans. The adventure doesn't mess around with setup, either: there's a brief intro, and then it's right to keyed area 1.

The Bad: The adventure is very predictable and linear, with only two real choices for moving through the dungeon (left or right). The NPC names are taken from H.P. Lovecraft, which is somewhat jarring and may put off some players.

The Skinny: A serviceable dungeon-crawl that's the perfect length for a single session.

Grade: B+

Bring him Back Alive!

Matt Forbeck

For 4-8 characters, level 1-4

Hook: A merchant hires the party to find his kidnapped son.

The Good: The adventure site is original and the new monsters (mites) are a welcome change from the typical big-scary-aberration fare. The monsters' motivation—they want the kidnapped son to serve as their king—is clever and refreshing.

The Bad: The level range is huge: at one end is a 1st-level party, at the other 8 4th-level characters—a 6th-level party. Since the encounters aren't any tougher than EL 2, I would recommend it only for level 1-3

characters (level 1 if there are more than 4 characters).

The Skinny: A standard hook, but an otherwise original and engaging adventure for beginning characters.

Grade: A

Castle Zadrian

Rich Wulf

For 3-4 characters, level 4-5

Hook: A noblewoman hires the party to investigate the disappearance of her father, a famous alchemist.

The Good: This ambitious adventure couples investigation with a dungeon-crawl to good effect. The party can uncover clues to the disappearance in town, and at the alchemist's tower they'll discover even more. The site itself is imaginatively designed, with extra-dimensional rooms and encounters that are challenging and well written.

The Bad: Not much. This premise could easily be fleshed out into a full-length adventure.

The Skinny: An engaging, well-written adventure that appeals to players who like investigation and hack-and-slash.

Grade: A

The Crypt of St. Bethesda

James Macduff

For 5-8 characters, level 2-4

Hook: The PCs are accused of murder, and must delve into the sewers to clear their names.

The Good: This adventure has a strong hook, a unique villain, and encounters appropriate to the party level. It's a fantastic side-adventure for a city campaign, and a savvy DM can easily expand the threat of the wormwraiths to create an entire series of connected adventures.

The Bad: Some players will find the hook heavy-handed, and the adventure is a very standard dungeon crawl. The new wormwraith's CR is too high as listed (should be CR 2, not 4), which makes the final encounter somewhat anticlimactic.

The Skinny: An excellent, high-quality adventure that's a perfect sideline for a city-based game.

Grade: B+

Dead Man's Cove

Ken Carpenter

For 3-5 characters, level 4-6

Hook: A wealthy merchant hires the party to "deal with" troublesome pirates in their lair.

The Good: The assault on the pirate compound is challenging and open-ended, and the captain's private treasure cave has its share of interesting encounters.

The Bad: If the party enters the compound during the day, they have a 50% chance of being detected. If they are, they fight 30 CR 2 pirates, an EL 11-12 encounter that is certainly fatal for any level 4-6 party. If they enter at night, they easily surprise the 21 pirates in the bunkhouse and kill them in their sleep, which is dull at best. There's no middle ground with this first encounter, and it doesn't play well.

This same feast-or-famine design style crops up in the treasure awards. The pirates as a whole don't have enough treasure for their CR, but in a room guarded by just two pirates (CR 3, too easy for the levels given) there's a *manual of gainful exercise*, a 27,500 gp item at the low end (and there's no indication which version this is) that's far too valuable for the party's level.

Once they deal with the pirates, the party is free to explore the pirate captain's treasure cave. This kicks off with a mysterious read-aloud section that is swapped in from the *Ice Caves of Azinth*, a major editing gaffe, and continues with some interesting traps, including a fragile crystal room that would benefit from a CR. The final encounter pits the party against seven sunken sailors, a new monster included in this module. Forgetting for a moment that the sailors' CR is too high as listed, this is an EL 9 encounter, again easily fatal for the low-end of the recommended party level.

The Skinny: A conventional premise that's not helped by rules inconsistencies and poor editing.

Grade: C

Garadon Manor

Patrick Kapera

For 3-5 characters, level 6-8

Hook: In this sequel to *Out of Body, Out of Mind*, the party is summoned by the Order of Garadon for questioning.

The Good: There are several interesting encounters with outsiders within the manor.

The Bad: The plot doesn't make sense: why would a secret organization of blackguards send an invitation out to heroes they mean to kill? Why not just kidnap and interrogate them? The author doesn't leave much room for PC suspicions either: what if they use *detect evil* during the interview, or *scry* the manor before entering?

It doesn't make much difference, because regardless of what anyone does the interview ends in a fight. When the dust clears, the PCs are left to explore the manor, which is in awfully poor shape for a working headquarters of evil. There's no climax to the adventure after this point, and it's left to the DM to determine what consequences the party's

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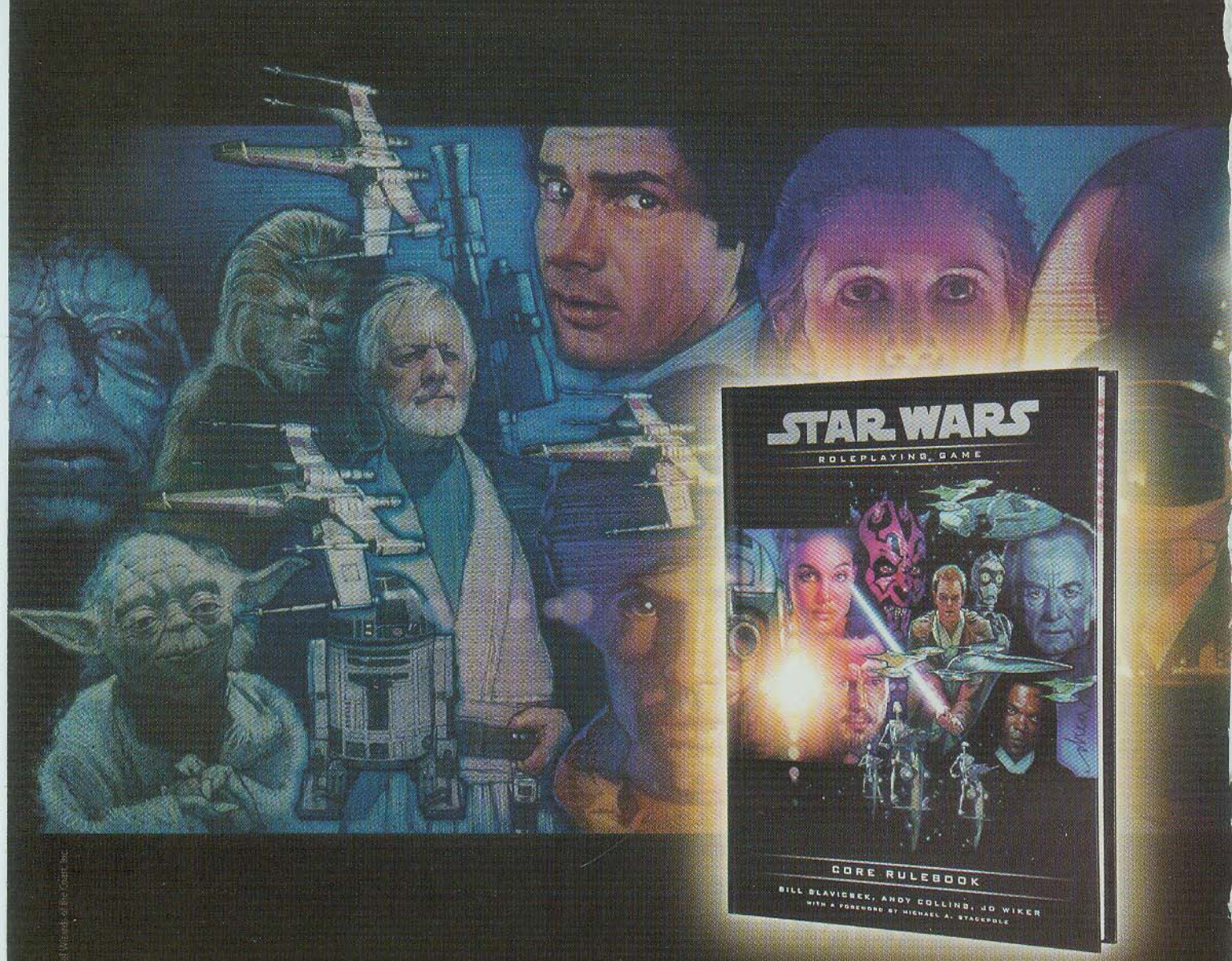

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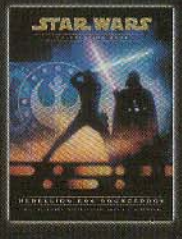

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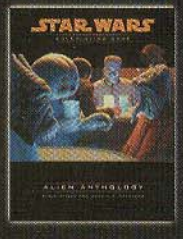

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slaughter of an entire order of paladins might have on their reputation.

Finally, the stat blocks are a disaster, with the party facing 4th-level blackguards with just 4 character levels—huh?

The Skinny: This meandering, pointless adventure never really gets off the ground.

Grade: C

The Heart of Amun Khonshu

Marcelo & Kat Figueroa

For 5-8 characters, level 8-12

Hook: A mysterious stranger asks the party to help him raid a long-lost tomb.

The Good: This deceptively simple dungeon crawl offers varied encounters, neat traps, solid writing and a strong grasp of the rules; it even includes a random encounter table for the trek across the desert. This excellent, high-quality adventure is fun for almost any party, and appropriate for the listed party levels.

The Bad: The only downside to this adventure is that it's not a full 32-page module.

The Skinny: Buy it and run it. It's among the best of the crop.

Grade: A to A+

The Ice Caves of Azinth

James Macduff

For 3-5 characters, level 2-4

Hook: The king of Azinth asks the party to investigate a magical winter that has closed the mountain passes.

The Good: The story behind the unnatural winter is very original, and the intelligent flesh golem Primus is a compelling NPC.

The Bad: EL is handled poorly throughout the adventure—a 2nd-level party can't hope to survive EL 7 and 8 encounters, but there are several. One is really a non-fight (Primus steps in to save the day), which is just a waste of everyone's time, but the rest are almost impossible to avoid, and should have been stepped down to an appropriate level.

The Skinny: If the DM is willing to devote some time to retooling the encounters, this is a nice change of pace from the typical dungeon crawl, and more than worth the price.

Grade: B

Jerimond's Orb

Ree Soesbee

For 4-6 characters, level 2-4

Hook: A missing magic item and a sinister curse draw the party into the mysteries of the town of Treefall.

The Good: One of several top-notch adventures from this author, this one is an event-based module that casts the party as detectives in a cursed farming town. The NPCs are interesting and believable, the writing excellent, and the curse itself well designed.

The Bad: Unfortunately, this adventure has a problem with Encounter Levels. One encounter pits the party against 10 CR 2 monsters—an EL 9 fight that will drop any level 2-4 party in a few rounds. An experienced DM can easily get around this, or simply modify the encounters before play.

The Skinny: A high-quality investigation adventure with plenty of fighting and intrigue.

Grade: A-

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Spare the women and children? Not in this misfire.

Kurishan's Garden

Ken Carpenter

For 4-6 characters, level 5-6

Hook: A merchant hires the party to find out why a local farming town recently stopped sending food.

The Good: A few nice details, such as a possessed guardsman yelling a warning before he's forced to attack. The writing is solid overall.

The Bad: Unless your party enjoys killing CR 1/2 innocent women and children, the encounters are much too easy and should be distasteful for good PCs. Both encounters with ordinary villagers are so weak they literally aren't worth XP for the party, and the climactic encounter is fairly predictable. The presence of a druid or cleric with the Plant domain makes this adventure laughably easy.

The Skinny: With a lot of work, this would be a decent adventure for level 1-3 characters.

Grade: D

The Last Gods

Kevin Wilson

For 4-6 characters, level 9-12

Hook: Azrael, the Lord of the Undead, taps the party to stop his future self from destroying the universe.

The Good: A unique premise that recalls the *Terminator* movies, and an adventure site that's chock-full of traps, tricks, and puzzles. Even if a DM doesn't plan to run this adventure, the puzzles and traps can be

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dropped into any module.

The Bad: I'm not sure why this strange side-dimension is located on the back of a giant beholder, and I'm not sure why its antimagic ray doesn't stop its own "ray of soul transference" from affecting the characters, but that's not the least of the Iron Fist design style at work here. Unfortunately, the author uses brute force and DM fiat instead of the rules to get his way. It's OK to say that the soul transference ray has a DC of 50, or that the bargainer (area 14) has damage resistance 50/+6, SR 50, and regenerates 100 points of damage per round, but to insist that these effects are immune to everything the characters throw at them is railroading, and most parties will feel manipulated and annoyed.

The climactic final encounter is simply terrible, with the party unable to do anything but distract the bad guy, who can do anything he wants at will (knocking the artifact out of the party's hand with no DC, for example), until in an actual *deus ex machina*, the good god brings back a slain party member to save the day. Characters just don't like being spectators, and that's all they are in this encounter.

The Skinny: Unless your party likes being railroaded and hit over the head by DM fiat, they won't like this adventure. Your best bet is to transplant the excellent traps and puzzles into an adventure of your own design.

Grade: D+

The Murder of the Seven Points

Erik Yaple

For 3-5 characters, level 5-8

Hook: The party is shanghaied into helping the town guard find a murderer.

The Good: The motive behind the murders is properly sinister and recalls a number of Hollywood thrillers, and the inclusion of a red herring is a nice touch.

The Bad: Although this adventure gets off to a great start, with a list of victims and plenty of opportunity for investigation, it quickly becomes clear that the plot is soldiering on with or without the PCs involvement. The killer attacks a party member in the market, and the author doesn't include an alternate branch for what happens if the PC wins the grapple, or uses *see invisibility* to unmask him—both very real possibilities. Finally, regardless of what the party does, the killer sacrifices himself to summon a demon, and it all ends in a fight.

The Skinny: A daring stab at an 8-page mystery that doesn't quite go the distance.

Grade: C+

Out of Body, Out of Mind

Patrick Kapera

For 3-5 characters, level 4-6

Hook: Monsters threaten the tomb of a great hero, and the party is called upon to clear them out. (This adventure leads into *Garadon Manor*, above).

The Good: A unique and imaginative adventure site (suspended over hot lava, no less) with a few worthwhile encounters and a nice surprise hook at the end.

The Bad: Several encounters are far too tough for the listed party level: two in particular are EL 10, and could easily be fatal for the entire party. The villain of the adventure is a new monster, a possessing spirit called a nescent, which has a great concept but is butchered in execution. It's given as a template, when it should be a monster with the ability to possess other creatures, and its stats aren't given—we don't know its Charisma modifier, so we don't know the save DC for its special abilities, its HD, or anything else. Finally, there's a strong chance that the party walks away from this adventure with a minor artifact, which I doubt will win any points with DMs.

The Skinny: An excellent map, average-to-good hook, and a few nice traps, but it requires some work to make useable.

Grade: B-

Servants of the Blood Moon

Ree Soesbee

For 3-4 characters, level 7-10

Hook: Displaced elves beg the party to liberate their once-holy forest of Myereth from a fiendish invader.

The Good: This excellent adventure delivers on the promise of the mini-adventure form. The writing is very good throughout, from read-aloud sections to NPC descriptions, and manages to convey mood and conflict more effectively than many full-length adventures. The villains are evocative and every character has a clear motivation. The party should feel like they are part of a living world, and the consequences of their actions are clear.

The Bad: Unfortunately, a few encounters are much too difficult. The first room of the bad guy's palace features an encounter with 13 osyluths and 4 servants of the blood moon, a new monster included in this adventure. Not only is that too many combatants (ideally you'd like to see a dozen enemies, tops), the EL is between 15 and 16: utterly deadly for every 7th-level party, and for most 10th-level parties. The climactic encounter puts the party against 10 servants

and a 12th-level sorcerer—at least EL 17, and probably a touch higher, and again certainly fatal for the recommended party levels.

The Skinny: If the DM spends a little time to rework the encounters, this is a fantastic, well-written adventure that the party will love.

Grade: A-

Sundered Faith

Kevin Wilson

For 4-6 characters, level 6-8

Hook: The governor hires the party to investigate deaths in the city sewers.

The Good: The author has taken pains to make this standard dungeon-crawl-versus-undead far deadlier than usual. Healing spells, turn checks, and detection spells are severely hampered inside the temple, and encounters that would normally be too easy for the party are right on par.

The Bad: A few rules errors will need attention before running. For some reason, all weapons used in the cramped maze become "piercing" type and deal half damage, and only Small or smaller weapons can be used. If the DM merely ignores the first direction and changes the second to allow only light weapons, things will run more smoothly. Instead of imposing a -1 penalty on all attack rolls, deny Medium-size or larger characters their Dexterity bonus to AC.

The Skinny: A solid dungeon crawl that features plenty of undead and a uniquely challenging environment.

Grade: B+

Tomb of the Overseers

Ken Villars & John Zinser

For 5-6 characters, level 3-5

Hook: A powerful lord tasks the party with calling back a legendary hero to save the kingdom from evil.

The Good: A large assortment of level-appropriate threats, from puzzles and traps to monsters, and the PCs get to play with powerful magic items in the course of their quest without any long-term repercussions.

The Bad: The adventure hook depends on a certain amount of backstory to explain how important the legendary hero is, which may not be appropriate for a given campaign. The plot places the party in the position of lowly messengers, which many players won't appreciate, and the site itself is a sort of place-for-adventure in the tradition of the original *White Plume Mountain*.

The Skinny: Despite some plot holes (why isn't this famous hero's tomb guarded?) it's a solid choice for a night of dungeon crawling.

Grade: A-

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Tomb of the Overseers
by Ken Villars & John Zinser
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A good, appropriate dungeon crawl.

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The Black Stairs

Darrell Hardy

For 4-6 characters, level 4-6

Hook: The party happens upon a princess under attack, and is pressed into service as guards.

The Good: The NPCs (particularly Lysara) are detailed and interesting, and the conflict between mercenaries and an undead noble is original.

The Bad: The encounters are too difficult for the listed levels—the first three are all EL 8+—and the final encounter depends on an NPC not being killed by the party, which is dubious at best. At the end of the adventure, the party could walk away with a minor artifact-level item that's priced at 60,000 gp but should be at least twice that, and which even at the listed price is far more treasure than a level 4-6 party should get.

The Skinny: A decent wilderness adventure that may be too difficult for some parties, and which depends too much on DM fiat to move the plot along.

Grade: B-

The Broken Plain

John R. Phythyon, Jr.

For 4-6 characters, level 3-5

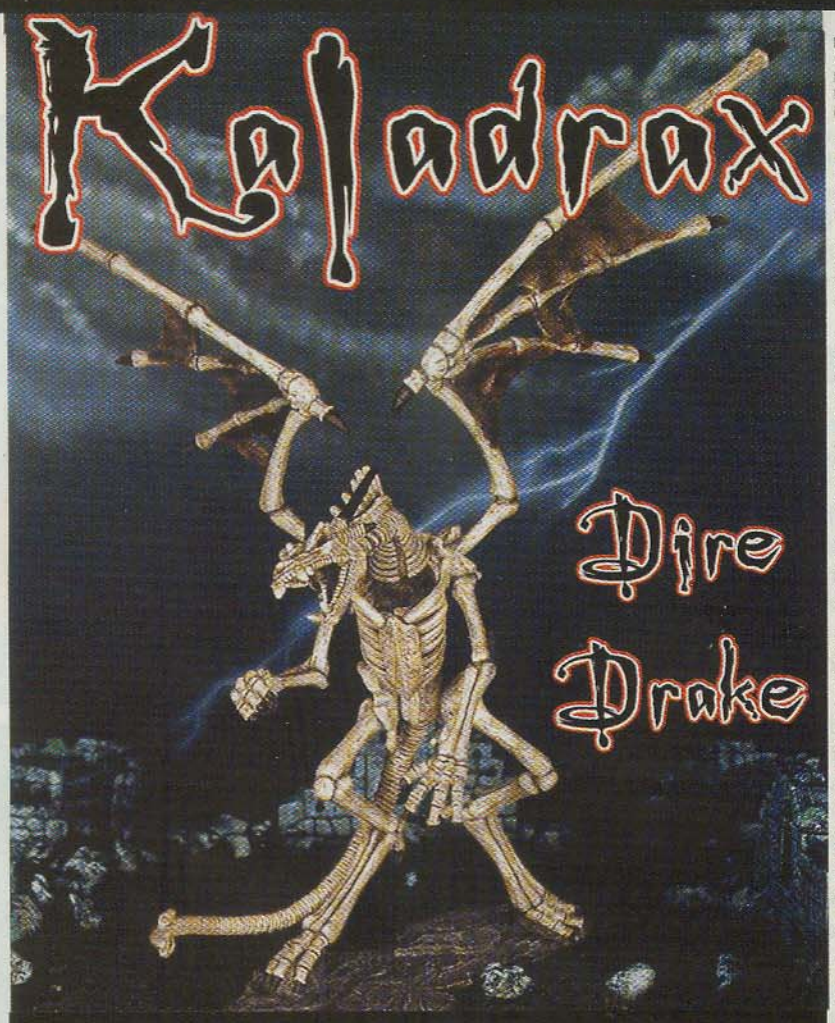
Hook: The party is hired to defend a riverside town from orc invaders.

The Good: The hook and adventure location are thankfully left vague, so they can be dropped into any setting with no trouble. The adventure features an excellent tactical map and several high-quality B&W illustrations.

The Bad: The plot progression depends upon several large-scale battles, which the D&D rules don't handle well. The author's attempt to abstract the results of these battles amounts to railroading, and the outcomes are determined regardless of the party's actions. There are also some references to "morale checks" which seem to be left over from the author's experiences with Second Edition AD&D.

The Skinny: A straightforward adventure with little opportunity for the PCs to affect the outcome until the final battle.

Grade: B-



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The Dark Tribe

Richard Tomasso

For 4-6 characters, level 3-5

Hook: Trapped by a storm, the party must broker a peace between warring villages.

The Good: Two complete societies are detailed, and enough background is supplied for an intensive session of roleplaying and investigation. The maps are attractive, if light on detail.

The Bad: The open-ended nature of the city investigation leaves a great deal of work for the DM. The module has only one (non-meaningful) encounter besides the climax, which pits the party against an EL 8+ challenge that's far too tough for the listed levels.

The Skinny: A decent investigation/roleplaying module that requires some work to make playable.

Grade: B-

Darkwood's Secret

Justin Bacon

For 4-6 characters, level 5-7

Hook: A local lord hires the party to act as envoys to the dark fairies to discover why they broke a pact.

The Good: The NPCs, encounters, and adventure areas are all well-rendered and interesting. The adventure offers a nice mix of exploration, combat, and roleplaying.

The Bad: A few of the encounters are much too difficult: one is actually EL 11, and fatal for any level 5-7 party.

The Skinny: A solid adventure that offers a little something for everyone.

Grade: A-

The Dragon's Wish

Justin Bacon

For 4-6 characters, level 9-12

Hook: A dying gold dragon tasks the party with returning its heart to the secret dragon graveyard.

The Good: Excellent B&W maps that could be adapted to another adventure.

The Bad: The wheels come off this one immediately, and the rough ride continues to the end. The adventure hook depends on the gold dragon dying before the party can help it, which just doesn't make sense. Any good party would attempt to heal it, and even a cure minor wounds or Heal check can stabilize a dying creature. This possibility isn't even addressed.

The first hostile encounter is EL 15, and will easily kill a party of 9th or 10th-level adventurers. On the other hand, it's so easily bypassed (just show them the dragon heart) that it's boring. There's no tension at all.

Inside the complex the party encounters kobolds. Yes, kobolds: two of them (that's a beefy EL 1/3 encounter if you're keeping score at home). Then there's an encounter with 14 kobolds, which is a staggering EL 2. I kept checking the cover to see if I'd misread that it's for level 9-12 parties.

There are some traps and a maze, and I kept thinking: why is this dragon graveyard built for Medium-size creatures? Why is there a maze?

All this dungeon-crawling serves to take the party to the other side of the (apparently very small) mountain, to a valley tucked into the mountain range. Assuming the party, say, flies or wind walks to this location, what are the odds that they don't fly around the mountain to check it out? If they notice a citadel in a hidden valley, they're likely to go there first. And again, why is there an underground entrance if dragons (which have wings, last I checked) could just fly over the mountain to the citadel on the other side?

The citadel is guarded by generic humanoid dragons, which aren't a threat to the party once they see the dragon's heart. The only point of tension comes in the form of an opposed Spot check to determine which side sees the other first.

It is entirely possible to complete this entire adventure without rolling a single die. If the players fly to the mountain, or scry the location beforehand, they'll see the valley and citadel, present the heart, and complete the task without a scrap of conflict.

The Skinny: Totally unusable.

Grade: F

The Fifth Sepulcher

Justin Bacon

For 4-6 characters, level 12-15

Hook: A desperate king begs the party to ferret out the evil under his castle.

The Good: This is an excellent site-based adventure filled with solid, if typical, encounters with undead. The map is attractive and useful, and the encounter levels are generally appropriate for the listed party levels.

The Bad: There's not a lot of mystery here. Any party worth its salt will stock up on holy water and ask the king to lend them a few holy weapons for the task, and the clerics and paladins will be right up front with their holy symbols ready.

The Skinny: A very strong, straightforward dungeon crawl.

Grade: A-

The Hidden Vault

Greg Benage

For 4-6 characters, level 5-7

Hook: A merchant hires the party to inves-

tigate a mine that has lost contact with the outside world.

The Good: The adventure site is huge and well-mapped.

The Bad: It's a dwarven mine—you've seen this one before. The bad guys are insectoid monsters that get smarter the closer they are to their queen, but they aren't anything to write home about (and should be beasts or magical beasts, not aberrations). The final encounter is at least EL 9, and likely higher depending on how many drones survive, and not survivable by a level 5 party.

The Skinny: If you're dying to run a standard investigate-the-mine dungeon crawl, this one's OK with a little work.

Grade: C+

Lost Hunt

Justin Bacon

For 4-6 characters, level 8-10

Hook: The party is attacked by a strange creature, and (hopefully) decides to investigate.

The Good: The maps are very nicely done.

The Bad: For an "instant" adventure, this module is in a hurry to introduce new campaign elements. Before we get out the gate, the DM is asked to swallow an entirely new elven pantheon, complete with an older elven pantheon which was overthrown in the distant past. Sure hope you weren't planning to use the core D&D cosmology, or your own homebrew system.

The hook is extremely weak. Throughout the adventure there are moments when I'm just not convinced a reasonable party would continue. They're expected to track a random encounter back to its lair, enter a cavern, and continue past a warning against disturbing the evil gods within, all For No Good Reason. The DM should expect to exercise fiat frequently.

Caution: Plenty of DM fiat ahead.

The "challenges" are easy if prepared for and instantly fatal if not, and they're dull—when's the last time you made your party endure a trap for 40-80 rounds? Finally, to restore this prison-for-bad-old-gods, the party is expected to repair some magic rings, using a mechanic that's unique to this module, which the PCs couldn't possibly know about. Again, be prepared to nudge.

The new monsters are nothing special (especially the sahlei, a beefed-up lantern archon that's inexplicably CR 8.)

The Skinny: A weak premise and very poor execution makes this adventure one to avoid.

Grade: D-

Olenar's Heartstone

Darrell Hardy

For 4-6 characters, level 4-6

Hook: The party is hired to find a missing wizard and his acolytes.

The Good: The party likely expects to find the wizard being held by bandits, but a magical accident has changed things in their lair—it's an interesting setup.

The Bad: The encounters are far too easy for level 4-6 characters, including the "spiderbeast" which is identical to a Huge monstrous spider but trades its poison attack for two claws and somehow comes out +2 CR on the trade. There's also just not much to it: three and a half pages are given over to background and a pointless encounter on the road, and the adventure site is short on adventure.

The Skinny: A lean, almost hollow module that doesn't deliver much adventure.

Grade: C-

Raid on Tonwell

Darrell Hardy

For 4-6 characters, level 5-7

Hook: The party is hired to retrieve a holy sword from an occupied town.

The Good: The hook is solid, the bad guys suitably evil, and the cathedral is a decent adventure site.

The Bad: On one hand, the encounters are too difficult for the listed levels, but in some ways the whole adventure is too easy for characters who can cast level 3 and 4 spells. A single *invisibility sphere* could get the whole party inside the cathedral with no conflict, and a flying, invisible wizard could complete the task himself.

Of course, the author rightly assumes that no D&D party will let an occupied town go unsaved, and the real adventure here involves overthrowing the evil barbarians and their minions.

The new monsters (particularly the tallin) are not well designed, and the holy sword that's the object of the quest is missing an enhancement bonus and market price.

The Skinny: A mediocre hook that leads to an average save-the-town adventure.

Grade: C

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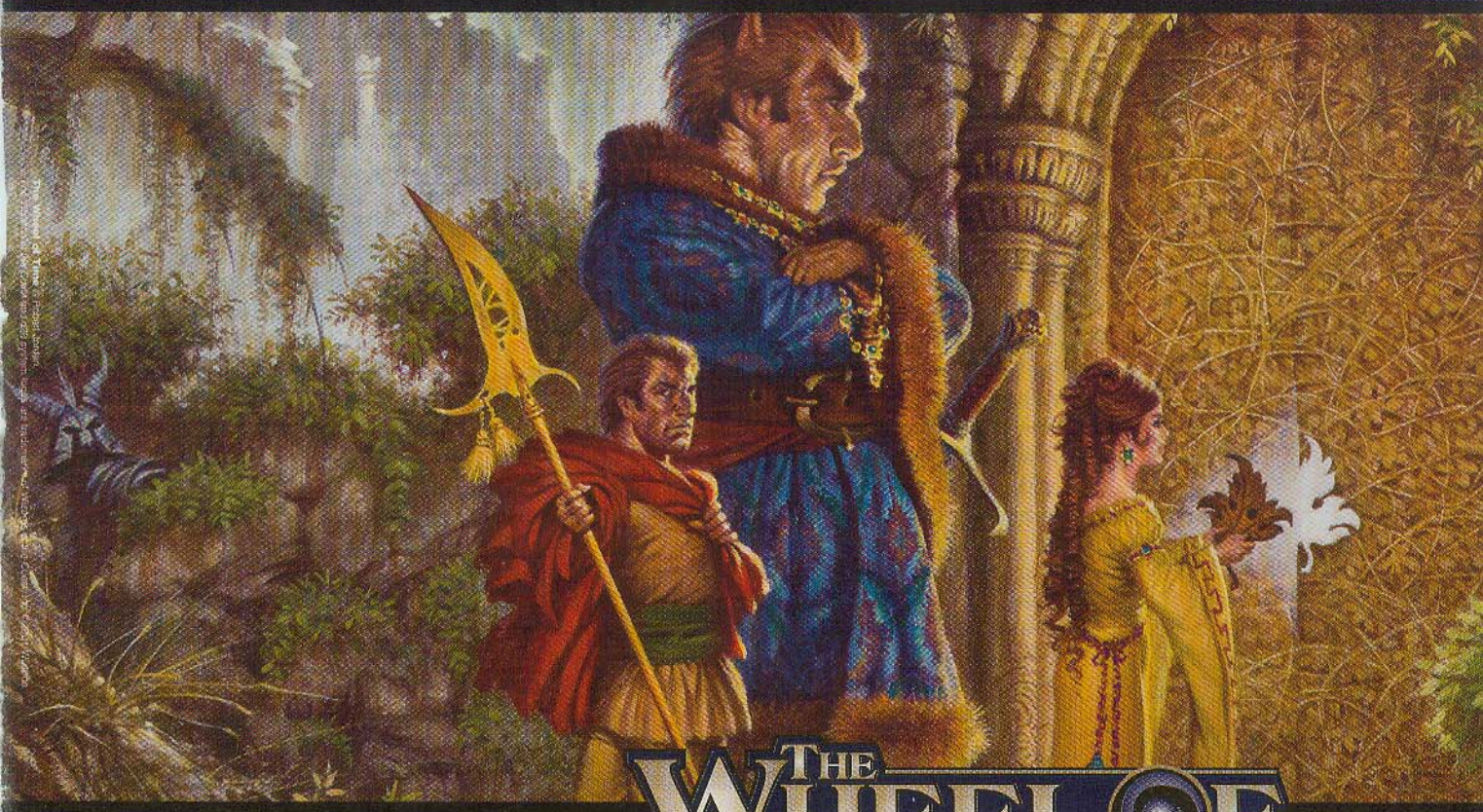

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Raven Mine

Greg Benage and Christian T. Petersen
For 4-6 characters, level 5-7

Hook: The party comes upon a house and decides to loot it.

The Good: The house and grounds are vividly described, and a mad apprentice makes for an excellent foil for the adventurers.

The Bad: Many critical parts of the adventure: traps, the bronze raven, and even the raven familiar that's pivotal to the plot, lack Challenge Ratings and other significant details. The raven itself isn't even given a stat block. The final encounter is EL 9, and lethal for any level 5 party.

The Skinny: A strong idea that would benefit from a little polishing and a hook.

Grade: B+

Sign of the Skull

Brian Wood
For 4-6 characters, level 5-7

Hook: A local lord hires the party to investigate the destruction of several villages.

The Good: The backstory is interesting and well thought-out, and could provide a hook for further adventures.

The Bad: The author assumes that the party marches around the countryside, when at least some of the characters can certainly do aerial reconnaissance. There are only two encounters in this adventure: the first is much too easy (EL 3) and the second is not winnable (30 orcs, 5 mounted orcs, 10 goblins, plus a wizard and an orc warrior). The new monster's stats have serious problems.

The Skinny: A poor-to-middling wilderness adventure with almost no substance.

Grade: D+

The Thief's Gold

Brian Wood
For 4-6 characters, level 4-6

Hook: The thieves' guild robs the treasury and re-mints the gold with their own symbol; the party is hired to stop them.

The Good: The premise is incredibly good, and with some development could kick off a chain of adventures.

The Bad: Unfortunately, the adventure doesn't live up to the great promise of its hook. Instead the mystery ends on page 2 when the thieves tell the party where they're hiding (?) and it becomes a straightforward and unoriginal crawl through the sewers. The encounters are far too hard for the listed party level (the first is roughly EL 13), and aren't what I'd expect from a guild of thieves. There are riddles: terrible riddles.

The Skinny: Steal the hook and write your own adventure around it.

Grade: C-

The Tuggarth Gauntlet

Peter Schweighofer
For 4-6 characters, level 4-6

Hook: The party is asked to find a murderer and investigate a mysterious wine spring.

The Good: The premise is original and intriguing, and the maps are fantastic.

The Bad: The encounters are too weak for the listed levels—even 14 goblins is just EL 3—and there's only a few. I would have liked to see a random encounter table for the woods, maybe including drunken owlbears and wolves. The climax of the encounter doesn't leave much room for the PCs to do anything besides hand the items over to the dwarves, who happen to jump out just as the party arrives.

The Skinny: With a little fiddling, this excellent premise could deliver a great adventure.

Grade: B-

In just eight pages, *Voyage to Storm Isle* creates a springboard for an exciting nautical voyage.

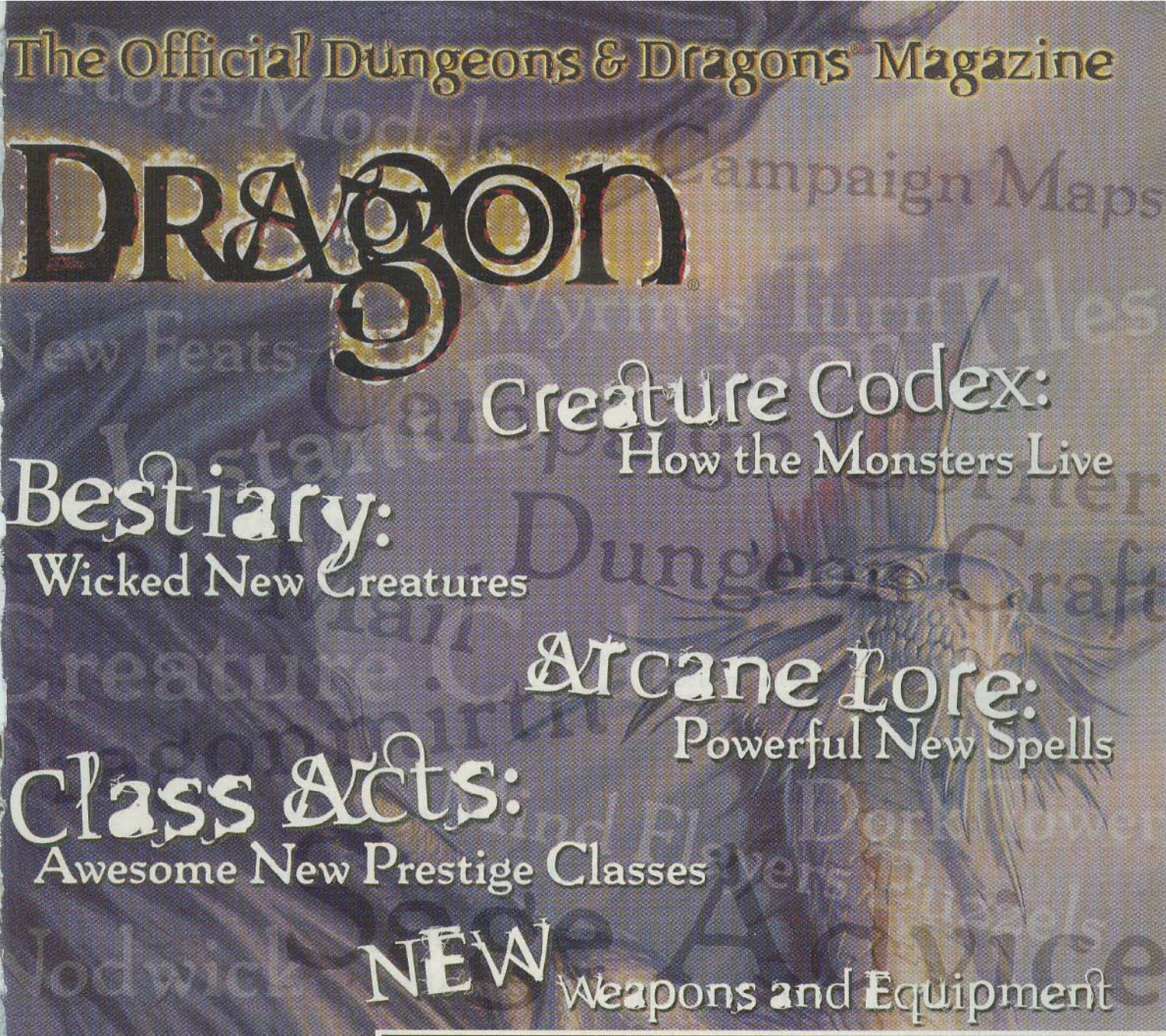
Voyage to Storm Isle

Mark L. Chance
For 4-6 characters, level 3-5

Hook: A sea captain hires the party to serve as guards aboard his ship.

The Good: In just eight pages, the author manages to create a springboard for an exciting nautical voyage. The special rules for falling overboard, detecting invading creatures, and so on are professional and show a strong grasp of the rules, and the encounters are well-planned and balanced. The intrigue onboard the *Salt Dog* is interesting without being overwhelming, and the NPCs are fully realized. The cartography is very good, and the interior B&W illos are solid and appropriate.

The Bad: Unfortunately the scope of the adventure slops over the length allotted, and the closing scene is forced and unsatisfac-



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tory. There's no chance for the PCs to hold onto the artifact in their care, though most parties will likely try and be killed for their efforts. A clever DM could easily turn tracking down the pirate into a campaign hook, or simply tone down the encounter to make it a fair fight.

The Skinny: An excellent and involving nautical adventure that's easy to drop into an existing campaign.

Grade: A-

The Wreyland Serpent

Justin Bacon

For 4-6 characters, level 12-15

Hook: A princess orders the party to hunt down and slay a black dragon in a gold mine.

The Good: The color maps are beautiful and very useful, and the dragon stat blocks are well done.

The Bad: Like Lost Hunt, this "instant" adventure kicks off with tons of campaign-specific information, including an entire protectorate of city-states, power struggles, and geographical locations. The dragons themselves (Sul'tara'ha'berthur and Al'aereyan'serul'il'taran—there will be a quiz later) are little more than set dressing, and don't figure into the plot at all until the end.

This crawl-through-the-mine adventure is populated by gold and silver sithaeon, new monsters for this adventure, and by ogres. Because all of these monsters are far too weak to face a level 12-15 party, the author has given them class levels to even the odds. Unfortunately, it isn't done well. Critters with class levels are assumed to have gear appropriate to their level. The Ftr5 ogres should be wearing full plate, carrying *potions of bull's strength* and *cure moderate wounds*, swinging *+1 greatclubs* and chucking masterwork javelins—instead they're decked out in hide armor and don't carry any ranged weapons. Worse, their feats aren't chosen with any thought: each one should have Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, and Weapon Specialization (greatclub). Instead they have Blind-fight and Great Fortitude.

Even stranger are the amorphous sithaeon, which have no humanlike culture, with levels of fighter and barbarian. The sithaeon fighters don't have enough feats, and the barbarians have too many, and neither are capable of using equipment that would make sense for these classes. These inconsistencies combine to make the encounters too easy. The ogres are rated at CR 7, but aren't, and the sithaeon aren't even a threat.

But the worst part of this module is that a level 12 cleric can simply cast *etherealness* on the entire party and they'll happily stroll through the mine without taking a single point of damage. Even *improved invisibility* would work, since none of the monsters have tremorsense or scent.

The final level has really, really big rooms that are completely empty, and an unguarded treasure horde worth 37,050 gp, though no details are given (any magic items?). Then the party meets the gold dragon (Al'aereyan'serul'il'taran for those keeping score at home), which isn't very interesting, and then the black dragon (Sul'tara'ha'berthur), which has somehow been able to infiltrate the gold's den, attacks. This would be a great encounter, if the party didn't have an adult gold dragon on their side. Any sane DM will assume that the gold tears into the black, and even if the party doesn't join in, the fight should last about ten seconds.

The Skinny: A pedestrian premise and very poor execution, but with a lot of work it could be usable.

Grade: C-

Like acting and oysters, there's really no such thing as an "OK" adventure: they're either great or terrible.

Conclusion

Like acting and oysters, there's really no such thing as an "OK" adventure: they're either great or terrible. The difference between an A product and a C is huge. The latter could require hours of reworking for little return, while the former is ready to run off the shelf.

Still, it's difficult to overstate how cheap these adventures are: even if you just get one idea from them, they're probably worth the few bucks. If nothing else, you get a map, an adventure hook, and some stat blocks.

The best of these are so good you'll wish they were longer, and strung together a DM could get many sessions worth of entertainment for less than the price of a movie. But choose carefully, or you may end up wishing you'd spent your $5 on dice instead.

Jim Bishop co-authored Green Ronin's Hell in Freeport *and contributed to* Legions of Hell. *We think he's a Hell of a guy.*

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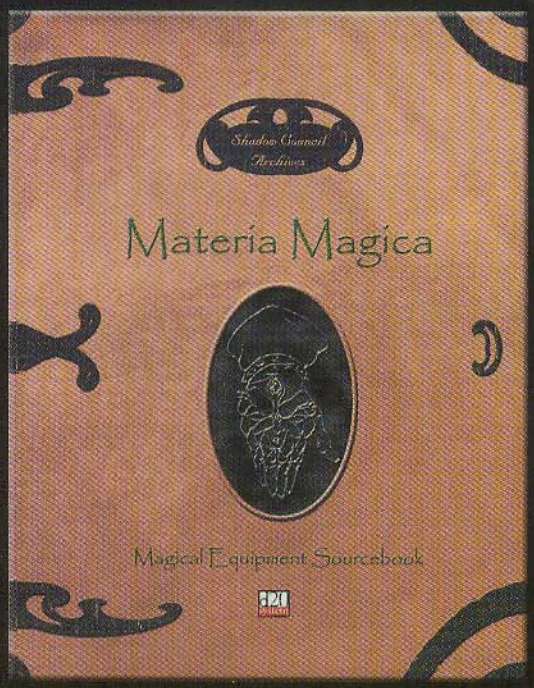
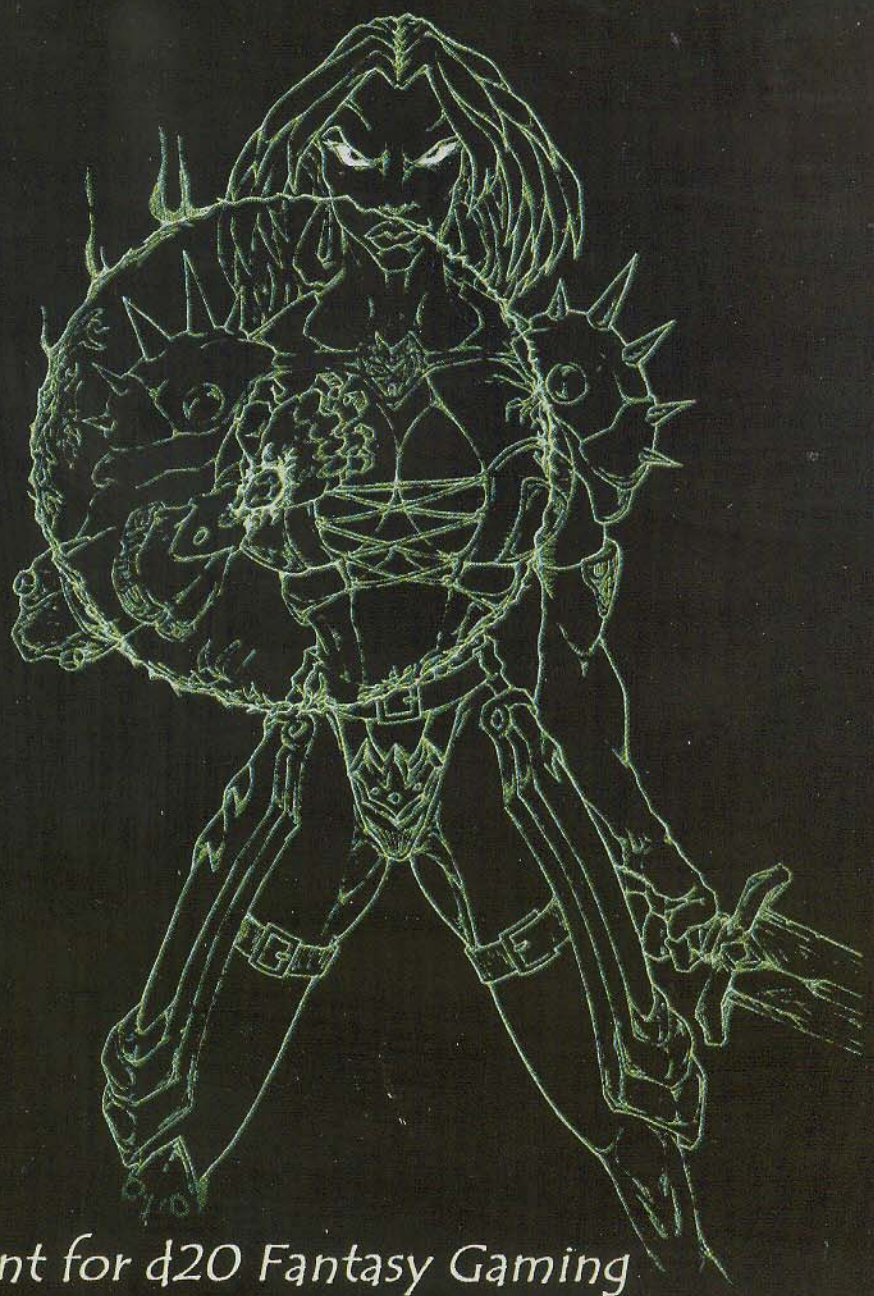
"You think you can handle my gear? Come and get it..."

-Tish, Defender of Justice





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